

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

ART EDUCATION PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE WITH ADOLESCENT  
STUDENTS AT-RISK IN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

BY

LISA KAY

© LISA KAY

DE KALB, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2008

## ABSTRACT

### ART EDUCATION PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE WITH ADOLESCENT STUDENTS AT-RISK IN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

Lisa Kay, Ed.D.  
Department of Teaching and Learning  
Northern Illinois University, 2008  
Deborah L. Smith-Shank, Director

## ABSTRACT

The goal of this qualitative research study was to explore and articulate the content, pedagogy, and intersections of art education and art therapy in art classes in two alternative high schools. Like other alternative schools, these sites serve students who are labeled at-risk and who are taught by art teachers who may have minimal specialized education to work with this population, but who have developed strategies, pedagogies and coping techniques for working with these challenging students. Phenomenological methods of data gathering were utilized, including participant observation, interviews, informal conversations, and document review. Arts-based research practices included 1) the creation of visual reflections as thematic analyses of

school visits and subsequent critical reflections of visual field notes, and 2) a written play that presents the research findings in dramatic form and constructs the story of art education from the perspectives of the two art teachers and multiple students in two alternative Midwestern school sites.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to my art teacher respondents, Mona and Louise, and their students for graciously allowing me in their classrooms and sharing their thoughts/ideas about what art education is and can be – for without them there would not be a story to tell. I would like to thank Deborah Smith-Shank, my director and mentor, for her guidance, energy, and support throughout the course of doctoral studies at Northern Illinois University. She helped me integrate my identities as artist, educator, and researcher. Suesi Metcalf has been a liked-minded colleague and my reality check. I have been enriched by Lee Shumow's integrity as a researcher, educational psychologist, and teacher as well as her friendship. And, thanks to Nina Dorsch, whose knowledge enhanced my research and this document. My deepest gratitude goes to Gail Jacky, my writing coach, who helped me understand my writing process and guided me through the dissertation maze; to my husband Scott Blunk, for his constant love, support, unique perspective, and sense of humor; to my son Clayton Blunk, for his love and understanding, technical support, and for being himself; and to Merrill Strauss and Patty Cooper for their sisterly love and encouragement.

I also extend my thanks to Eun-Hei (Maria) Lim for being my companion on this journey; to Carolyn Faivre, Susan Thomas, and Rebecca Cohen for their friendship, guidance, and editorial expertise; to Janie Wilson-Cook for visual technology support and technical problem solving; and to Laura English for her assistance formatting and preparing this document digitally.

DEDICATION

For Charlie

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	x
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
LIST OF APPENDICES .....	xiii
PREFACE.....	xiv
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	2
Problem Statement.....	4
Purpose Statement .....	5
Research Questions .....	5
Sub-questions .....	6
Significance of the Study.....	6
Conceptual Framework .....	7
Methodology.....	9
Working Definitions .....	11
Organization of the study .....	13
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
At-risk .....	16

Chapter	Page
Definitions .....	15
Approaches .....	17
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder .....	19
Language and the Label “At-risk” .....	20
The Spectrum of At-risk .....	21
Alternative Education .....	22
Characteristics of Alternative Education Programs .....	25
Models of Alternative Education .....	26
Categories of Alternative Schools .....	28
Critique of Alternative Education .....	29
Staff/Educator Roles in Alternative Education .....	31
Art Education and Students At-Risk .....	32
Contemporary Art Education .....	35
Feminist Art Education .....	40
Art Education Therapy .....	41
Art Therapy .....	42
School Art Therapy .....	43
Contemporary Art Therapy .....	46
Feminist Art Therapy .....	47
Chapter Summary .....	48
3. METHODOLOGY .....	49
Sampling .....	53
Culture/Population .....	56

Chapter	Page
Setting A: Kozol Community Education Center .....	57
Setting B: Birch Substance Abuse Treatment Center.....	57
Data Collection.....	59
Observation.....	62
Arts-based Research .....	63
Interviews .....	65
Data Analysis.....	70
Chapter Summary .....	72
4. FINDINGS .....	73
Playwright’s Note.....	76
Cast .....	76
The Settings .....	79
Act I .....	83
Scene 1: Beginnings .....	84
Scene 2: Working things out .....	88
Scene 3: Individual needs.....	91
Scene 4: Violence .....	95
Scene 5: Conversations.....	96
Scene 6: Taboos.....	99
Scene 7: Life issues .....	101
Scene 8: Distance .....	105
Scene 9: Returning to class.....	106
5. EPILOGUE .....	108

Chapter	Page
Teaching Challenges .....	118
Alternative Schools: A State of flux.....	118
Understanding Art Education.....	119
School Supplies, Art Supplies, and Technology .....	121
Multi-level/Multi-aged classes. ....	122
Continuing Education.....	123
Isolation .....	123
To Display or Not to Display?.....	124
Handling Difficult Issues in the Art Classroom .....	125
“Art is something pretty and nice to look at” .....	127
Troubled students .....	129
Coping with Students’ Traumatic Stress, Sadness, and Pain .....	137
Transformation Art Pedagogy .....	138
Caring .....	141
Curriculum.....	141
Communication .....	142
The “Other”, the Outsider.....	143
Students as the “Other” .....	144
Researcher as the Outsider .....	145
Relationships .....	148
Teacher-Student/Student-Teacher Relationships .....	148
Reciprocity .....	149

Chapter	Page
Rewards .....	150
Nurture or Nature or both .....	151
What <i>is</i> normal?.....	152
Chapter Summary .....	153
6. CULMINATING THOUGHTS .....	154
Implications for Art Education.....	158
Recommendations .....	161
Future Study .....	165
Continuing Reflections .....	167
REFERENCES .....	171
APPENDICES .....	184

## LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Sites/Respondents/Gatekeeper .....	57
2.	Demographics .....	58
3.	Research Questions/Data Collection .....	61

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Conceptual Framework and Methodology .....	9
2.	Visual Memo .....	65
3.	Teenscapes. Visual Memo .....	66
4.	Visual Memo .....	67
5.	Mona Lisa's Desk .....	77
6.	Louise's Desk .....	78
7.	Dragonflies .....	83
8.	Leaves .....	85
9.	Kaleidoscope .....	86
10.	Word Design .....	89
11.	Imagination .....	91
12.	Perspective Drawing .....	92
13.	Self Portrait .....	93
14.	Self Portrait .....	93
15.	Name Design .....	99
16.	Charcoal Drawing .....	100
17.	Shape/Form .....	103
18.	Solitude .....	107

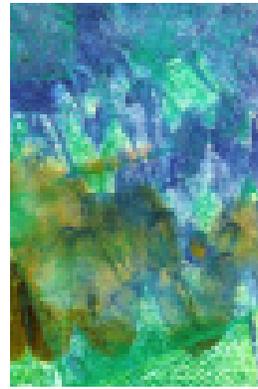
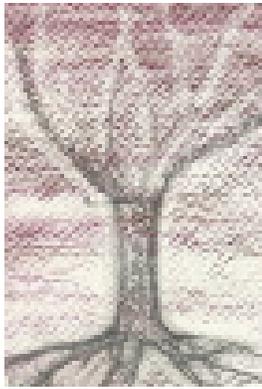
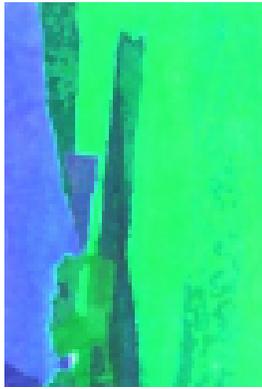
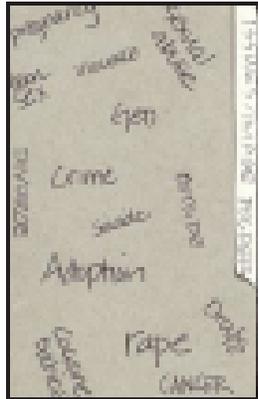
Figure	Page
19. Bead Collage, Mona Lisa .....	112
20. Bead Collage, Louise Nevelson .....	113
21. TORN, Field Note/Visual Memo .....	117
22. Caught in a web .....	120
23. Collaborative Student Project.....	121
24. Shape/Form.....	126
25. Texture Drawing.....	132
26. Visual Field Note.....	136
27. The Racial Divide.....	146
28. Collage.....	149
29. Free Painting.....	168
30. Bit by Bit, Putting it Together .....	170

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
A. LETTER, INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD .....	185
B. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM .....	187
C. TEACHER PROFILE FORM .....	189
D. LETTER TO PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS.....	191
E. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	193
F. OBSERVATION SHEET .....	195
G. CONTEMPORARY ART EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ART THERAPY .....	197

## PREFACE

Using arts-based research is a relatively new phenomenon in the field of qualitative research; however, it was an important part of the data gathering and data analysis process in this dissertation. The images that are used in the chapter divider pages represent visual field notes and visual memos that were created from August 2007-April 2008.



# chapter one INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In this qualitative study, I studied art education pedagogy and practice with adolescent students at-risk who attend school in alternative high school settings. Traditional schools do not work for many students for numerous reasons. They are funneled into alternative school settings where some of what takes place is essentially therapeutic. In traditional schools and alternative high schools, art education is a part of the curriculum, but few people have studied it in alternative settings. If some of these alternative schools are fundamentally therapeutic in nature, then does it follow that art teachers are practicing therapeutic art? For this reason, I ask the question: How do art teachers and their students characterize art education in alternative high schools? Since little is known about this phenomenon, this study may be important to alternative education, general education, art education, and/or art therapy.

#### Background

A growing number of students and schools are labeled at-risk, but what does this term mean? At-risk is a broad descriptor used to describe a myriad of both students and educational settings whose parameters and descriptions are vague, varied, and generally dependent upon local, state, and federal funding mandates to educate

difficult students. Often students labeled “at-risk” have had traumatic experiences that affect their ability to learn and function in social settings like school. Regardless of the cause or degree, many students in schools of all types have and are experiencing traumatic stress personally, collectively, and culturally, and it is essential that teachers have the tools and resources to effectively serve all students’ needs. Like children who experience war, many traumatized students in U.S. schools exhibit symptoms and behaviors that have a direct effect on learning. Children and youth who have survived trauma of any form are vulnerable to post traumatic stress. Garbarino, Kostelny and Dubrow (1991), for example, report that a high percentage of urban youth exposed to violence develop post traumatic stress disorder.

In addition, at-risk “youth in urban schools who have sustained severe and repeated traumatization may have strong concerns about their own humanness, may appear frozen in a heightened state of arousal and [may] have great difficulty processing information verbally” (Steele, 2002, p. 1). Because numerous youth who are labeled “at-risk” in urban schools suffer from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and its effects (Garbarino, et al., 1991), “ordinary” education is not always effective.

Teachers and staff in effective alternative schools intentionally foster a sense of community within the school, partnering with parents and the local community. Curriculum theorist Apple (2000) explains that successful teaching requires a “conscious building of coalitions between school systems, [and] communities being served” (p. 39). Many alternative high schools provide a small, supportive, educational

environment where staff functions as a surrogate family for at-risk youth (Barr & Parrett, 1995). “The nurturing climate and individual attention provided for these adolescent students at-risk reengages them in the learning experience and gives them a sense of belonging, of community” (De La Rosa, 1998, p. 3). Due to these reasons, and in part to the context within which they practice, these educators may have developed useful strategies for working with students who are considered at-risk and may provide insight into teaching strategies useful for all students. Students may be best served by educational approaches that affirm their sense of identity (Giroux, 1992), and art education is often a site in the curriculum where identity can be explored and affirmed (Darts, 2004). Art teachers who teach art in alternative school settings are in a unique position to provide insights into what it means to work with challenging students. They must provide each student with individual attention, and while not functioning as therapists, they must respond to the social, behavioral, and emotional issues and traumatic stress each student brings into the classroom setting. Their stories, strategies, and frustrations can help all art teachers explore issues of both pedagogy and content as well as the fine line between art therapy and art education practices in this volatile contemporary U.S. society.

### Problem Statement

A growing number of students are worried about real and potential violence as well as the multiple cultural issues that impact their lives personally, collectively, and culturally. Many of these students frequently suffer from post traumatic stress, which

can have profound effects on learning (Garbarino, et al., 1991; Shumow & Perry, 2006). Unfortunately, many art teachers have only limited knowledge, training, and/or experience to deal with the complexity of these students' issues and no education on ways to adapt or intervene with students who exhibit the symptoms of post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS). Nevertheless, students could benefit from thoughtful and informed education based upon a teacher's informed insights into the parameters and treatment of PTSS and other behavioral, social, racial, and economic issues related to youth in alternative schools.

#### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore and articulate art education content, pedagogy and practice, and intersections of art education and art therapy in art classes in two alternative high schools.

#### Research Questions

This study is driven by the following research question.

How do students and teachers in alternative high school settings characterize art education?

### Sub-questions

- What teaching and learning occur in art education classrooms with adolescent students at-risk in the alternative high school settings?
- What is the art teachers' role in this type of setting?
- What are the goals of the art teacher?
- What are the goals of the students?

### Significance of the Study

This qualitative study is positioned at the intersection of two hybrid art disciplines: art education and art therapy. Art therapy and art education have been conflated over the past several decades, although both fields are adamant that there is little to no cross-over (Bush, 1997; Hite, 1996; Kramer, 1958; Robbins & Sibley, 1976; Rubin, 1999; Ulman, 1961). One of the most salient points of intersection has been the notion that children make art grounded in their own experiences. Both art therapists and teachers have responded to these visual documents. Although they are educated to respond to art works in different ways, consideration of some strategies for art education may benefit both fields.

Art classes are often sites for students with problems. Some school administrators and counselors may recognize the benefits of art education and place adolescent students at-risk in art education classes (or art may be seen as the one place that these students can cause fewer problems than in academic classrooms). However,

many art teachers lack adequate training to meet the needs of these traumatized youth and many school districts do not employ art therapists. Approximately 300 members or 10% of the membership of the American Art Therapy Association (AATA) work in private or public schools (C. Malchiodi, personal communication, October 11, 2006). Cathy Malchiodi, a noted art therapist, explained that it is difficult to determine the exact number of art therapists who practice in schools since some art therapists in the schools do not have *art therapist* as their job title, or they work as special educators, art educators, or counselors using art in a therapeutic manner. Not all art therapists in school settings are members of AATA, which increases the difficulty in tracking exact numbers of art therapists working in school settings (Malchiodi).

Although art educators do not do “therapy,” art teachers can have a positive impact on adolescent students at-risk. They may assist students’ formation of identity, interrogate social concerns with students, and facilitate personal expression and meaning making through the creation of meaningful artifacts in their classrooms. This qualitative study, *Art Education Pedagogy and Practice with Adolescent Students At-risk in Alternative High Schools*, illuminates the worlds of art education for students and teachers in at-risk settings and concludes with discussions of content, pedagogy, and implications for art education.

### Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main dimensions [of a topic] to be studied - the key factors, or variables - and the presumed relationships among them. Frameworks

come in several [formats]. They can be rudimentary or elaborate, theory-driven or commonsensical, descriptive or causal. (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 28-29)

According to Bishop (1999), a conceptual framework assists the researcher in tracing research possibilities and options. Bishop suggests listing and clustering ideas and connections in both a linear and visual fashion. This qualitative study uses both phenomenology and constructivism as research frameworks and uses images as conceptual springboards for generation and clarification of ideas.

Phenomenology is a complex and multifaceted philosophy that when applied to qualitative research emphasizes the subjective experience of participants by describing and identifying everyday experiences from their perspective. The researcher personifies participants' experiences by giving them voice. The constructivist paradigm grew out of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and the study of interpretive understanding called hermeneutics (Eichelberger, 1989). Constructivists argue that the researcher personifies participants' experiences by accepting/honoring their story and that knowledge is socially constructed through shared understandings, beliefs, practices, and language (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Dewey, 1916; 1934; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt, 1994; Vygotsky, 1987).

This qualitative study focuses on art education pedagogy and practice from the experiences and perspectives of art teachers working in alternative high schools. These multiple methods were employed as conceptualized in the following visual diagram, which was inspired by a cicada wing (see Figure 1).

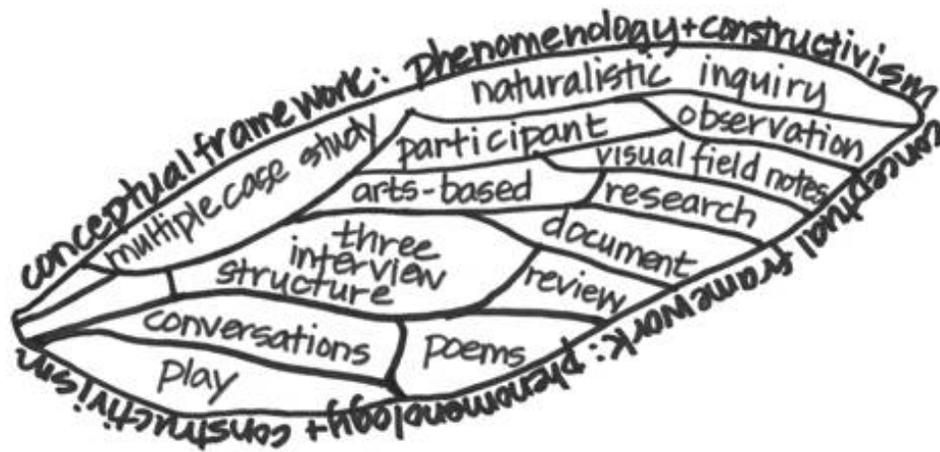


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework and Methodology

### Methodology

The study, *Art Education Pedagogy and Practice with Adolescents At-Risk in Alternative High Schools*, illuminates the phenomenon of art education with adolescent students at-risk in alternative high school settings. A phenomenological study investigates the meaning of the lived experiences of individuals about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). A variety of methods can be used in phenomenological research, including formal interviews, informal conversations, participant-observation, action research, analysis of personal texts, and focus groups. The number of subjects is small in phenomenological research in order to gather in-depth information of each individual's experiences rather than measure specific variables (Creswell, 1998).

A constructivist approaches research with the intention of understanding “the world of human experience” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 36), suggesting that “reality is socially constructed” (Mertens, 2005, p. 12). Throughout the research process, the researcher relies on qualitative data collection methods and analysis to support or expand upon qualitative data, to deepen descriptions, and to “generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings” (Creswell, 2003, p. 9). The constructivist researcher tends to rely upon the “participants' views of the situation being studied” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8) and recognizes the impact on the research of her/his own background and experiences.

In this qualitative study, situated in two alternative high schools, 95 observations were conducted twice-weekly over the course of one semester in two art education classrooms with two art teachers and their students. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the two art teachers to understand their perspectives about what art education is and how it is delivered in these alternative high school settings. The following data gathering methods were used: participant observation, including field notes and field memos; a three-interview structure with teachers; informal conversations with teachers, students, and staff; and review of ordinary instructional documents, including curriculum, lesson plans, students' art work and my own art work, including visual field notes and memos, poems, and a play.

## Working Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are being used.

Alternative education: The U.S. Department of Education (2002) defines alternative education as “a public elementary/secondary school that addresses the needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, provides non-traditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school or falls outside the categories of regular, special education or vocational education” (p. 14). Alternative education is used to describe schools or programs targeting students who are unsuccessful, for multiple reasons, in the traditional school milieu.

Art education: Art education is a traditional part of school curricula and has been variously described since its inclusion in U.S. schools in the late 1800s. Contemporary art education includes art making and related skill development and can be defined as a potentially transformative curriculum about visual culture and social practice that encourages students to create their own images, reflect critically upon the their own and the images of others, and critically interrogate the plethora of visually presented issues that they encounter in everyday life.

Arts-based research: Arts-based research is the methodical use of the artistic process, including the making of artistic expression in multiple forms of the creative arts, as a primary way of understanding and experience by researchers and those they involve in their studies (McNiff, 1998).

At-risk: A term used to describe students who are in danger of various types of personal, social, or educational failure. Generally these students have not been adequately served by social service or educational systems. They may have experienced negative life events, physical or mental challenges, and are at-risk for educational failure due to lack of services or intervention. At-risk describes multiple groups of students who may have experienced “failure in their careers as learners” (Presseison, 1991, p. 5).

At-risk schools/institutions: A term used to describe schools or institutions that are at-risk of not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) according to No Child Left Behind Legislation.

Student at-promise: A descriptor that emphasizes students’ strengths and positive attributes rather than weaknesses and deficiencies (Higgs & Tarsi, 1997).

School art therapy: Art therapy is a psycho-educational therapeutic intervention that focuses upon art media as primary expressive and communicative channels.

The art therapy process allows [the student] to explore personal problems and potentials through nonverbal and verbal expression and to develop physical, emotional, and/or learning skills through therapeutic experiences...Art therapy can facilitate appropriate social behavior and promote healthy affective development so that children can become more receptive to learning, realizing their social and academic potential. Therefore, art therapy in a school...can be relevant to a child’s education and social and emotional maturation. (American Art Therapy Association, 1985, pp. 13-14)

Clinical School Art Therapist: The clinical art therapist may work with regular and/or exceptional students in the school setting. These clinicians use art psychotherapeutically and diagnostically and write individual education programs (IEP) with goals, objectives, and progress notes (Bush, 1997). An art therapist teaches techniques not for skill development, as in art education, but instead in the service of sublimation, feeling articulation, communication, and self-expression.

The art classroom: The art class is a site in an educational facility for teaching and learning about traditional art and visual culture and for students' reflections and critical inquiry leading to visual expression and visual communication.

Youth: Students age 13 to 21.

Visual culture in art education: Contemporary art education that encourages students to navigate, critically interrogate, and create visual imagery.

### Organization of the Study

This study is comprised of six chapters. Chapter 1 provides the introduction, problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions. It also provides significance of the study, conceptual framework, methodology, and working definitions. Chapter 2 offers a review of literature related to topics, including at-risk, alternative education, art education with adolescent students at-risk, art education therapy, contemporary K-12 art education, feminist art education, art therapy, school art therapy, contemporary art therapy, and feminist art therapy. Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology used in this study including research design, data gathering,

and data analysis. Chapter 4 provides the study results and a presentation of the research data in the form of a play. Chapter 5 offers a discussion of the findings. Chapter 6 offers implications, recommendations for future research, and culminating thoughts.



chapter two  
LITERATURE  
REVIEW

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the research questions, this review of literature will address these topics: alternative education including definitions, characteristics, models, categories, and staff/educator roles; notions of at-risk including definitions, approaches, models and art education with adolescent students at-risk; contemporary K-12 art education, feminist art education, art education therapy; and art therapy including school art therapy, contemporary art therapy, and feminist art therapy.

#### At-risk

This study focuses on art education programs serving students at-risk. In considering this population, literature is reviewed about how at-risk status is defined, approaches to at-risk as a category, post-traumatic stress disorder as a factor, language of at-riskness, and the at-risk spectrum.

#### Definitions

At-risk according to *Webster's Online Dictionary* is defined as “endangered, troubled and in potentially dangerous situations or exposed to danger or harm of some kind.” Hixon and Tinzman (1990) contend that defining who at-risk students are is

controversial. Historically, students at-risk have been those students “whose appearance, language, culture, values, communities, and family structures did not match those of the dominant white culture that schools were designed to serve and support” (p. 11). Traditionally, students who are labeled at-risk have been categorized using many terms, including educationally disadvantaged, culturally deprived, low income, drop out, alienated, marginalized, handicapped, disenfranchised, disabled, impoverished, underprivileged, low achieving, and low performing. At-risk describes multiple types of individuals who, for numerous reasons, have experienced “failure in their careers as learners” (Presseison, 1991, p. 5).

According to Frostig and Essex (1998), students at-risk are children and adolescents prone to academic failure due to a variety of risk factors that include emotional disturbance and /or social adjustment problems that can be further compounded by family issues of neglect, violence, and/or poverty (p. xvi). As Stepney (2001) explains, “academically at-risk” students are often at-risk of dropping out of school; “behaviorally at-risk” students exhibit negative school behaviors; and “socially at-risk” students face serious legal consequences and involvement with the juvenile justice system (p. 48).

### Approaches

There are no simple descriptors or categories that define this growing population of students (Presseison, 1991). Scholars Hixon and Tinzman (1990) and McCann (1991) offer different perspectives. McCann’s approach suggests that

individual student characteristics, environmental circumstances, student abilities, and student behaviors define students at-risk. These approaches emphasize negative qualities: student deficiencies, deficient environments, self-destructive behaviors, and failure to meet educational standards. McCann adds that “these multiple definitions, with their multiple components have led to fragmentation in educational delivery systems” (p. 15). Instead, Hixon and Tinzman (1990) describe four approaches to identify students at-risk: predictive, descriptive, unilateral, and school factors. Predictive and the descriptive approaches, which are the most common, focus on students’ deficits, paralleling McCann’s approach. The unilateral approach suggests that “all students are at risk in some way or another” (p. 13). School factors may include rigid scheduling, narrow curricula, emphasis on basic skills, unsuitable teaching materials and/or curricular decisions, tracking, isolated pull-out programs, inappropriate placement, controlling environments, and/or teacher/administrators’ attitudes toward students at-risk and toward their parents.

O’Thearling and Bickley-Green (1996) explain the dissonance that may exist within the skill sets of students who are labeled at-risk:

From a social constructionist point of view, at-risk youths have assembled a reality that is dissonant with the general social structure. Within their cohort they may display social talents, skills, and knowledge that are as highly developed as those of more conventional students. Nevertheless, the at-risk apply these talents in an apparently contrary manner, and as a result they are marginalized. (p. 20)

### Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Many adolescent students at-risk in U.S. schools exhibit symptoms and behaviors that have a direct effect on learning. Some of these students at-risk who have survived trauma of any form are vulnerable to post traumatic stress. Garbarino, Kostelny and Dubrow (1991), for example, report that a high percentage of urban youth exposed to violence develop post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

PTSD is characterized by hyper vigilance, exaggerated startle response, sleep disturbances accompanied by nightmares, chronic fears for safety, irritability and angry outbursts, difficulty concentrating, and repeated or perceived threats of harm. These behavioral, psychological, and physiological symptoms are often triggered by memories of severe trauma. Researchers report that rates of PTSD are higher in identified at-risk groups such as youth in foster care or abused and neglected children (McCloskey & Walker, 2000; Shumow & Perry, 2006). Students with PTSD appear “more likely to engage in traumatic reenactment in which they incorporate aspects of the trauma into their daily lives and exhibit impulsive and aggressive behaviors” (Hamblen, 2005, p.2).

According to Shumow and Perry (2006), due to changes in the central nervous system, students with PTSD live in a persistent state of vigilance which may manifest as inattentiveness, lack of focus, or an over sensitivity to perceived environmental threats. Often signs of hyper vigilance are misunderstood and students are labeled oppositional, resistive, uncooperative, or misdiagnosed and treated for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (p. 10).

In addition, at-risk “youth in urban schools who have sustained severe and repeated traumatization may have strong concerns about their own humanness, may appear frozen in a heightened state of arousal and [may] have great difficulty processing information verbally” (Steele, 2002, p. 1). Because numerous youth who are labeled “at-risk” in urban schools suffer from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and its effects (Garbarino, et al., 1991), “ordinary” education is not always effective.

#### Language and the Label “At-Risk”

From a poststructuralist perspective, Higgs and Tarsi (1997) have argued that the language used to describe students who are labeled at-risk impacts their experiences and constructs their social reality. The label at-risk with its negative connotations is synonymous with failures: in school, in their family, and in relationships, and suggests “persons-at-trouble” (p. 119). These researchers offered as a more optimistic descriptor “student at-promise” that emphasizes strengths and positive attributes rather than weaknesses and deficiencies.

Venable (2005) used the phrase “at-risk and in-need” (p. 48) in reference to incarcerated youth whose backgrounds and experiences overshadow their learning issues. He contends that the students with whom he worked were both “at-risk and in-need” due to multiple variables, including abuse and poverty. Venable assisted his pre-service art educators working with youth in a juvenile detention center to re-frame

their perceptions of at-risk by focusing on the students' needs rather than the pejorative label.

Similarly, *Raw Art Works (RAW)*, founded in 1988, uses the phrase “youth in the struggle” to describe “kids on the edge of falling into a life of crime and emotional deprivation” (Raw Works, n.d.), who are served by the nonprofit Massachusetts youth arts center program. The Raw Art Works program seeks to help develop youth as artists with a strong sense of identity by providing a safe environment that fosters belonging and acceptance; by using art as a vehicle for success-oriented opportunities through skill-building and future-building; and by developing collaborations between youth at-risk and their communities. Working with youth in detention facilities, public housing, schools, and soup kitchens, the founders, who are certified art therapists, developed a critical arts-based model that blends art education and art therapy by engaging elementary, middle, and high school students in art making that transforms their lives and communities. Through RAW art experiences like “find me, circular thinking, or personal documentaries,” students embrace their creativity, express/explore self-identities, and access their own power to change their lives.

### The Spectrum of At-Risk

The term “at-risk” is broad and complex and describes a wide spectrum of students with multiple issues that put them on a trajectory for failure within traditional educational communities. Few scholars, teachers, administrators, or students tagged with the label agree on a single definition, yet most people have a preconceived notion

of its meaning. Some art teachers approach their work with students at-risk positively (Anderson, 1984; Losel, 2007; Metcalf, Gervais, Dase, & Griseta, 2005) while others consider the inclusion of students at-risk in their classrooms to be an educational and professional dilemma (Poelstra, 1996). When there is no clear understanding of the term, confusion abounds. Students and their teachers are at a disadvantage. With the increasing preponderance and complexity of issues faced by contemporary youth, Hixon and Tinzman (1990) offer clarity with their ecological approach, which is a unilateral model, that is proactive, democratic, and does not assign sole responsibility or place blame on any one entity (student, parent, school, environment, community).

This approach views education as a socially constructed process that is affected by the social and academic organization of the school, family circumstances and school conditions, the community where schools, families and students live, and the interrelationship between each of these factors (Hixon & Tinzman, 1990). They suggest that there are numerous school factors that impede the success of students at-risk, including rigid schedules, narrow curricula, focus on basic skills, unsuitable texts/instructional materials and/or curricular decisions, tracking, isolated pull-out programs, and teacher/administrators' attitudes toward students at-risk and their parents. Alternative schools were developed to address some of these factors.

### Alternative Education

This study focuses on art education programs in alternative settings. In considering this form of education, literature is reviewed about characteristics of

alternative education, educational models used in alternative education, categories of alternative schools, a critique of alternative education, and staff/teacher roles in alternative schools.

Many times, the students and teachers come together in what are often called “alternative schools.” According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2000-2001 there were 10,900 alternative schools serving approximately 612,900 students (National Center for Educational Statistics). As of 2006, the number of alternative schools in the U.S. had grown to 20,000 (Aron, 2006, p. 10). At the current growth rate, it is estimated that there are over one million students currently receiving alternative education in public and non-public school programs around the country. Students attend alternative schools for a variety of reasons. Some students or their parents choose alternative schools, while others are referred by the courts or their home school districts due to social, emotional and/or behavioral difficulties. Some students attend alternative schools because they offer flexible scheduling, special programs, or services.

Like many terms used in educational arenas, alternative education has numerous connotations and definitions. In a broad sense, much of the U.S. public educational system has evolved from a type of alternative education (Garrison, 1987; Paglin & Fager, 1997). Many early alternative schools, still successful today, have been models for other schools. For instance, the Chicago Metro School is patterned after the Philadelphia Parkway School that focused on student control over their learning and integrating resources in the community as learning laboratories. Many

other alternative schools in the U.S. are fashioned after Montessori's alternative public schools created in the 1970s that emphasized individual and small group instruction, cooperative learning, and individual responsibility. More recently, U.S. school districts have developed quasi-alternative schools that serve as sophisticated tracking systems (Barr & Parrett, 1995) to contain and separate problem students from the larger student body. In a diverse society with students having varied educational needs, alternative education offers necessary educational options. Unfortunately, the term "alternative school" has negative connotations largely due to the attitudes regarding students who are difficult to teach.

Most alternative schools evolved in response to the needs of students who were experiencing academic and social failure in traditional school settings (Groves, 1998). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2002), alternative education is defined as "a public elementary/secondary school that addresses the needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, provides non-traditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school or falls outside the categories of regular, special education or vocational education" (p. 14). The term "alternative education" includes many different types of programs whose initial purpose was to prevent academically at-risk students from dropping out of school or ending up in the juvenile justice system. White (2003) describes alternative education as

Schools or programs that are set up by school districts, states, or other entities to serve young people who are not succeeding in a traditional public school environment. Alternative education programs offer students who are failing academically or may have learning disabilities, behavioral problems or poor opportunity to achieve in a different

setting and use different and innovative learning methods. While there are many different types of alternative schools, they are often characterized by their flexible schedules, smaller teacher-student ratios, and modified curricula. (n.p.)

For the purposes of this research project, the term “alternative education” is used to describe schools or programs targeting students who are unsuccessful, for whatever reason, in the traditional school milieu.

### Characteristics of Alternative Education Programs

According to Barr and Parrett (1995), early researchers found diversity within alternative education. Many alternative schools were small, with fewer than 500 students, and they usually focused on the needs of a specific group such as drop outs, potential drop outs, talented and gifted, or they reflected a particular educational philosophy such as open schools, Montessori education, or community-based learning. These early alternative schools were accessible to parents, students, teachers, and administrators by choice. These alternative schools made the effort to match teaching and learning styles. Student achievement and self-esteem, attendance, and students’ attitudes toward education were evaluated when considering the effectiveness of the school (Barr, 1972). From these early schools, contemporary alternative schools developed their philosophies to best serve their unique populations.

Many students thrive in high-quality alternative school settings due to the student-centered, and the community-and future-oriented nature of these programs (Aron, 2006; Dugger & Dugger, 1998; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Leone & Drakeford,

1999; National Association of State Board of Education, 1996). Successful alternative education programs attend to social and educational needs of students when developing curricula, support services, and structure (National Association of State Board of Education, 1996). Two examples of alternative education programs specifically designed for high school students including those at-risk are schools-within-a-school, with specially focused programs within a school or on campus, and City-as-School (CAS) that combines paid work with academic learning (Aron, 2006). Raywid (1981) explains that these schools focus more on caring and relationship development than regular high schools where teachers may see 150 students per day in measured time slots and students may be in class with as many as 8 different peer groups per day, conceivably interacting with 240 classmates.

### Models of Alternative Education

A wide variety of models of alternative education exist that are operated as charter schools or independent schools. For example, there are Career Academies, experiential learning environments, Twilight Academies, Diploma Plus, Early and Middle College high schools and teen parent programs. In addition there are more familiar national educational programs like Job Corps, YouthBuild, Center for Employment training (CET), Youth Service, and Conservation Corps. There is great variety and although similarities exist, each model is unique.

For example, the Career Academies model offers “an alternative pathway that integrates academic and technical instruction that creates healthy learning

communities and supports independent study and project-based learning” (Gajda & Dorfman, 2006, p. 13). According to Gajda and Dorfman (2006), these alternative schools, sometimes referred to as schools within schools, are often designed as personalized learning environments where students can acquire technological and vocational skills for future jobs. In contrast, Early and Middle College High schools are small high schools supported both publicly and privately to provide low-income students opportunities to earn their high school diploma, associate degree, or college credits. These schools are unique in that they have been created within community colleges and universities to better serve high school students. Some states allow students to simultaneously meet high school and college requirements by double listing mutually approved classes (Aron, 2006).

“It is important that many features [of alternative schools] are similar to those considered essential to effective K-12 programs and schools” (Aron, 2003, p. 24). For instance, experiential learning environments are schools that emphasize the practical and the pragmatic, tailored after the progressive ideas of educational philosopher John Dewey, and these schools emphasize hands-on learning activities. Many alternative schools adopt this model by combining learning outside of the classroom in community settings and natural environments with personal experiences. Job Corps and YouthBuild, both government-funded programs, are designed to develop skills and prepare students for future employment and to contribute productively to society (Aron, 2003). Job Corps, designed to serve the needs of students who dropped out of high school, offers a variety of educational and vocational training programs and with

a stipend. Graduates can receive their GED, job coaching and/or learn a trade.

YouthBuild also targets youth who have dropped out of school or who are unemployed to alternate between the classroom and a construction site. Students may earn a GED and job skills while building low income housing.

### Categories of Alternative Schools

Raywid (1981) outlines types of alternative schools: Type I are full time programs for students of all kinds that provide individualized curriculum and specifically focus on graduation. Models can range from magnet to charter schools, schools-within- schools, career- and job-focused schools, after-hour programs, drop-out recovery programs and schools in atypical settings (e.g., malls and museums). Students choose to participate in these schools. Type II schools are often described as “last-chance” (p. 27) schools or programs that focus on behavior management and discipline rather than emphasizing curriculum in attempt to reshape students’ negative behavior patterns. Type III schools are considered therapeutic and serve students with social/emotional difficulties that impede learning. These schools offer remedial work, social and academic programs, different therapies such as art, speech, occupational, and counseling, and social services for students and families. In this type of school, the goal is returning students to their home school district for graduation. The latter types serve at-risk student populations in hopes of discouraging students from dropping out and becoming involved in the juvenile justice system (Raywid, 1994). Students are

referred to Type II and Type III schools by their home school districts. In this study, one of the schools is Type III and the other is a combination of Types I and II.

Roderick (2003) prefers to identify students by grouping them according to educational challenges rather than type. According to Roderick, Group I are those troubled students who need short-term assistance to get back on track. Group II are those students who have prematurely become adults either due to parenthood or family situations that prevent their attendance in a regular school. Group III are older students who for a number of reasons have fallen behind and wish to quickly transition to community colleges. Roderick explains that this group is the largest and most diverse group of students that is currently being served in urban alternative education programs. Group IV are students with serious difficulties academically and socially. Often these students are academically several levels behind their peers and have accrued few credits toward graduation. Roderick contends that most school districts do not have programs to meet the needs of this population of students. What seems clear is that many alternatives are necessary to serve the many types or groups of students who would benefit from alternative education. Part of the quandary is that neither schools nor students fit in clear niches.

### Critique of Alternative Education

Alternative schools attempt to meet the educational needs of all students at-risk when, in reality, these schools may not work for every student at-risk (Raywid, 1994).

Some alternative schools ascribe to a “grocery list” approach that lumps all students at-risk in the same category (Johnston & Wetherill, 1998).

In the culture of No Child Left Behind, low performing students at-risk may be shuffled off to alternative schools so test scores are not impacted. Rather than dealing with their learning issues in the regular educational settings, students at-risk are sent to the most readily available alternative education program (Johnston & Wetherill, 1998), which may not address their particular educational needs.

Often, alternative schools may be only temporarily successful. When students at-risk are not progressing or doing well in the alternative educational environment, rather than look at the school’s program or the appropriateness of a particular placement, students are often blamed for the lack of success. When students return to their regular school, they may not always be as successful as they were when attending school in the alternative setting. It is unrealistic for alternative schools to expect to solve the array of problems that categorize these students at-risk in the first place (Aron, 2006; Raywid, 1994). Additionally, alternative schools can have an image problem due to the types of students they serve, and these students can be stigmatized and marginalized because they attend school in an alternative setting. Finally, these programs can be costly to operate. The low teacher/student ratio, smaller class size, and more support staff/services increase the fiscal expenditures school districts incur to serve fewer students (Aron, 2006).

### Staff/Educator Roles in Alternative Education

Raywid (1981) explains that “human relationships are among the most educative features of an alternative school [and that] the most single prevalent feature of alternative education is its emphasis on interpersonal relationships within the school” (pp. 65- 66). Accordingly, within an alternative school, a reasonable amount of time is spent facilitating a sense of compassion among peers and between students and teachers in what is called “community building” (p. 66). Raywid notes that compassion and caring are “centrally concerned with acknowledging and nurturing what is at the heart of humanness” (p. 67), a contention that “caring teachers listen and respond differently to their students” (Noddings, 2005, p. 19) and assist students to be “recipients of care” (p. 108). Within this culture of caring, successful alternative schools facilitate a sense of family among teachers, students, and support staff (Groves, 1998) that promotes teaching and learning. The emphasis is on making real connections with students and genuinely communicating concern, support, and empathy.

In alternative schools, teachers often have additional administrative responsibilities. They are responsible for documenting ongoing assessment of students’ social and educational needs, developing individual education programs, and monitoring ongoing progress (Groves, 1998). They often dialogue with students about educational issues and other problems as well as with students’ home school. Teachers and administrative staff attend meetings with parents and conferences with mental health and child welfare agencies involved in students’ education. They make phone

inquiries about students who are absent and referrals to support agencies as deemed necessary. Thus, in the current study I observed the art teachers' roles and responsibilities in alternative high schools.

In the book *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*, Giroux (1992) envisions pedagogy as “a configuration of textual, verbal, and visual practices that seek to engage the processes through which people understand themselves and the ways in which they engage with others and their environments” (p. 3). Giroux argues that “educators need to approach learning not merely as the acquisition of knowledge but as the production of cultural practices that offer students a sense of identity, place, and hope” (p. 170). Alternative education can be such a configuration that promotes at-risk students' self-understanding and provides a sense of identity, a sense of place, and a sense of hope. This is precisely what Apple (2006) affirms is possible when activist educators imagine and sustain a vision of hope for a better society, culturally and politically. As contemporary artist Lacy (1995) maintains, it is imperative “to search for the good and make it matter. This is the real challenge for the artist. Not simply to transform ideas or revelations into matter but to make those revelations actually matter” (cover). Alternative education and art education seek to make education for students and teachers matter.

### Art Education and Students At-Risk

This study focuses on art education pedagogy and practice with students at-risk. Literature is reviewed about art education with multicultural students' at-risk, art

education with rural students at-risk, urban art education and students at-risk, art teachers' perspectives working with students at-risk and the social aspects of art with students at-risk.

Hoepfner and Silverman's (1969) work with multicultural at-risk students suggests that art education might significantly influence the perceptual, cognitive, and attitudinal behaviors that predispose culturally diverse youth to success or failure in schools. Furthermore, Guesnell (1996) contends that schools need to address academic as well as emotional needs of at-risk students and "therapeutic art activities on a school campus might provide an early intervention that could help to address emotional issues that at-risk students have so that they can be productive learners" ( p. 1).

Clark and Zimmerman (2000) examined a community-based art program, Project ARTS (Arts for Rural Teachers and Students), that served at-risk rural students with an affinity for the visual and performing arts in Indiana, New Mexico, and South Carolina. The researchers claimed that rural students were at-risk and required educational programs to meet their unique needs. While rural districts have many local resources to offer, they lacked resources available in larger cities where exposure to the arts is greater. Whereas the research focused on curriculum, assessment, and applicability to other rural contexts, the researchers observed through participation in Project ARTS that students developed cultural pride and increased appreciation for community arts. While Clark and Zimmerman's research was situated in rural areas, Fahey and Frickman (1996) studied art education in an urban magnet school

environment. In their longitudinal case study centered in New Orleans, researchers reported art was used to involve at-risk students in their community and develop positive attitudes about education. In this study of art education, self-esteem, and inner city youth, Fahey and Frickman concluded that art provided marginalized students with a voice, an improved sense of self-worth, and skills necessary to function in the commercial art world.

Twiss and Cooper (2000) conducted case studies of K-12 at-risk youth and analyzed the involvement of students in art programs designed to revitalize the community, teach job skills, and involve parents and senior citizens in the arts with the students. After a nine-year study of art programs with artists, students, and the community, the researchers witnessed an increase in community pride, a positive sense of well being, and increased marketable job skills among participants.

In another case study of three art educators teaching at different levels (elementary, middle and high school) in the same district, Poelstra (1996) examined how the inclusion of at-risk students in the art classroom impacted the learning environment and the effectiveness of the art educator. Because the issue of inclusion was viewed as dilemma for many art teachers, Poelstra studied experienced art teachers' perspectives and strategies for working with at-risk students. Common sense, consistency, open mindedness, knowledge of content area, reduced class size, and examination of personal biases were some of the recommendations to art teachers, neophytes and veterans, who are challenged by the inclusion of at-risk students in their classrooms.

Cosier (2001) investigated the social aspects of art with at-risk students in an art classroom in an alternative high school. Cozier argued that “teaching art is more than delivery of curricula; it is a socializing experience that can support or hinder students’ overall development toward empowered citizenship” (p. v). Her research showed that an alternative high school structure fostered relationship building between students and teachers that directly affected teaching and learning and that those students who had been estranged from the educational system formed connections with the art teacher and peers. While Cozier studied at-risk youth in the alternative high school art classroom, Venable (2005) worked with pre-service art teachers and youth “at-risk and in-need” (p. 48) in a juvenile detention center. He suggested at-risk variables like abuse and poverty overshadow students’ learning issues. Venable argued that art making, specifically creating group murals, offered these youth in juvenile detention a sense of control and the opportunity to make connections with humanity.

### Contemporary Art Education

In the current study all students are at-risk; I observed and described art education pedagogy and practice in these settings. The literature reviewed the historical roots of art education including, contemporary art education, feminist art education, and art education therapy.

The roots of contemporary art education can be found in the works of numerous art educators (Greene, 1978; Lanier, 1982; McFee & Degge, 1980). In their book *Art, Culture and Environment: A Catalyst for Teaching*, McFee and Degge

“extend the spectrum of what art is to encompass the study of art as a form of cultural communication” (p. 2). Their work focuses on the intersection of art, culture, and environment and emphasizes socially significant and meaningful art curricula. This is noteworthy because of the focus on the visual aspects of culture in art education. McFee and Degge’s ideas resonate with other art education theorists like Lanier, whose thoughts shape art education today with its emphasis on visual culture. Lanier implies in *The Arts We See* (1982) that art is inextricably linked to socio-cultural context and suggests that mass media and signs of culture form part of the larger umbrella of the visual arts. Lanier contends that visual culture in art education and mass media should be considered part of the broader category of the visual arts and that art teachers include mass media (visual culture) in their pedagogy to help students make critically informed decisions about the arts and images they encounter as a part of their everyday experience. For Freedman (2003), the introduction of visual culture in art education is based on the global shift from text-based communication to visual communication.

Contemporary art and its constructs have created a shift in the practice of K-12 art education. In contemporary art education, this represents a paradigmatic shift in methodology, philosophy, and content in the art education classroom. The earlier approaches to art education do not fully consider contemporary art with its multiple contexts or its political and social themes. A contemporary approach to art education blends critical social issues, contemporary art, and pedagogy while simultaneously

integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, including postmodern, feminist, multicultural, popular and visual culture, and community (Gaudelius & Spiers, 2002).

“Art education can create domains where there are new possibilities of vision and awareness” (Greene, 1978, p. 196). Freedman (2003) offers both vision and awareness in a model for postmodern art education curriculum and teaching visual culture by synthesizing social, critical, cognitive, and curriculum theory. As she suggests, “if we view art and art education as aides to making life more meaningful, as a reflection of liberty, and as one of the ways in which people might pursue a constructive form of happiness, art education is a sociopolitical act” (p. 314).

Art education as a social and critical inquiry cannot be “concerned with the practical and not with the theoretical because the practical and the critical are inseparable in this relationship” (Atkinson & Dash, 2005, p. xii). Similarly, art-making in art education is not only about the creative use and transformation of materials, but also about the transformation, deconstruction, and reconfiguration of ideas (Lim, 2006). These approaches resonate with Greene’s (2001) thoughts about meaningful approaches to art-making that have “to do with reshaping, renewing the materials at hand, very often the materials of our own lives, our experiences, and our memories” (p. 26).

Contemporary art educators are being educated in social and critical approaches that “recognize [the] need to connect material covered in class with the experiences and interests of students” (Darts, 2006, p.7). According to Marshall (2004), the “impetus for change in art education comes from the domains that border

on and influence it – art, general education and the socio-cultural world of students” (p. 70). Art education allows students the opportunity to positively transform themselves, their communities, and their worlds (Darts, 2004; 2006; Desai, 2005; Freedman, 2000, 2003; Garber, 2001; Garioan, 1999). For example, in an interdisciplinary course that combined contemporary issues and the visual arts, Darts (2006) guided high school students in what he calls “individual and collective artistic investigations and creative cultural interventions” (p. 6) that address drinking and driving, harassment, violent behavior and prejudice, public surveillance, trash, and consumerism through the visual and performing arts.

While art teachers do teach techniques, the art classroom is also a site for personal inquiry and reflection on art with both individual and social content. Smith-Shank (2004) asserts that “where art education fits into the realm of curricular power is a constant part of the disciplinary discourse, and has been since art was considered relevant enough to human intellectual and technical growth to include in formal schooling” (p. ix). Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr (1996) suggest that art curricula utilize postmodern concepts. For instance, one lesson titled “Posting Ideas” (p. 120) easily adapts for K-12 students and/or multiple learning formats and employs numerous postmodern ideas like the connection between art and culture, concept of time and place, democratization, and concern for the *other*. Approaching K-12 art education curriculum through a postmodern lens is like a “landscape” (p.137), where works of art, significant concepts, and understandings are examined through multiple perspectives and viewpoints rather than grand narratives (Efland, 1990). Duncum and

Bracey (2001) suggest that “understanding the experience of contemporary visual culture requires two lenses” to comprehend the pleasurable experience and to grasp the semiotic meanings presented (p. 25).

Contemporary art education encourages learners to navigate and question their place in society in relation to self and others. It involves the creation of artwork that includes self-identification and incorporates aspects of students’ visual culture. Freedman (2003) notes that “the primary purpose of such student art is not therapeutic; it is social and cultural. It is not just about individual emotions; it is about personalization of social issues ... If education is working, students can make art that comments on social justice, community change, and concern for the environment” (p. 148). Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) echo similar themes (sense of self, sense of place, sense of community) for thematic inquiry and authentic instruction. This approach defines art education as a transformative and powerful social practice and encourages students to reflect upon their own images, images of others, and the plethora of images and issues that they encounter in everyday life. Contemporary art education can then be a place for “reenchanting our culture, our youth... and connecting art to its integrative roots in the larger whole and the web of relationships in which art exists” (Gablik, 1991, p. 112).

In this study I observed and described the types of teaching and learning that occur in art education classrooms in two alternative high school settings, and explore and articulate the content, curricula and pedagogy, and the intersections of art education and art therapy.

## Feminist Art Education

Feminist art education is a fusion of feminism and art education. As Sandell (1979) explains, “feminism applied to art education can refer to the process either of educating an artist through feminism, or educating about feminism through art” (p. 18). Feminist art education overlaps multiple domains, including the art world, the women’s art movement, women’s studies, and education. In their book, *Women, Art and Education*, Collins and Sandell (1984) argue for a pluralistic approach that addresses issues of gender equity and power relationships in art education (p. 178) and contend that feminist art education has psychological, social, and aesthetic significance.

The psychological value of feminist art education lies in its potential to provide compensatory education about art and women...the aesthetic value of feminist art education lies in its capacity to revise art history providing new paradigms for comprehending and valuing works... [and] feminist art education has increasing social value as it promotes awareness and raises the status of women and art in society. (p. 70)

Similarly, Dalton (2001) draws a portrait of feminist art education that incorporates “women's art, pluralism and diversity of subject matter, 'other' perspectives, and multicultural initiatives” (p. 136). According to Dalton,

Feminist methodologies and a cultural re-evaluation of the “the feminine” have meant that rhetorics of cooperation and care rather than individualism and competition, fluidity and flexibility rather than rigid subject boundaries, and bricolage or gathering and eclectic modes of creativity are appearing more often instead of linear, scientific “planning modes.” (p. 136)

This approach to art education shifts teacher and student power relationships, creating an atmosphere where students are empowered and active in their own education. In the current study both art teachers are women; therefore, I observed their practice for tenets of feminist art education and report their perceptions.

### Art Education Therapy

In 1957, Lowenfeld revised and expanded *Creative and Mental Growth* (1947), an influential text in both the fields of art education and art therapy. He introduced the notion of the educator as therapist, discussed therapy and art education, illustrated therapeutic aspects of the creative process with handicapped children, and presented multiple case studies of art as therapy. At Pennsylvania State University, he delivered numerous lectures on children's creative expression, emotions and imagination, and self-identification through art. He addressed the nature of art education therapy as "us[ing] the creative activity as a means of self-realization," outlined the "stages...in a therapeutic situation" for teachers/therapists (pp. 436 - 444), and described "art therapy as a heightened or intensified form of art education" (Chapman as cited in Michael, 1988, p. x). It is unfortunate that after Lowenfeld's death in 1959, the chapter on art therapy was removed from future editions of *Creative and Mental Growth*, limiting future educators' and therapists' access to the formidable ideas of this pioneer in both fields. Silver (1984) speculates this was due to the art education field's discomfort with art therapy in the 1960s when "art teachers were under the thumb of abstract expressionism [and] figurative art was taboo" (p. 90).

Regardless of the reason for its creation and subsequent removal, Lowenfeld's work on the subject has influenced educators and therapists. Based on the philosophy that art contributes to child development creatively, physically, emotionally, and cognitively, art educators and art therapists have emulated Lowenfeld's ideas with regular, special education, and students at-risk (Eisner, 1972; Korzenik, 1990).

### Art Therapy

Art therapy is a hybrid discipline developed from the fields of art and psychology. In 1961, Ulman, the founder and first editor of the *Bulletin of Art Therapy*, published a definition many people find applicable today. Ulman claimed that anything that is to be called art therapy must genuinely partake of both art and therapy. Rubin (1999) adds that the definition of art therapy does not depend on the client or venue, but rather why art is being offered (p. 223). Art therapy helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self-awareness, and achieve insight (American Art Therapy Association, AATA, n.d.). However, Rubin (2005a) explains that

When art materials are given to...troubled individuals the activity may well be educational. If the primary purpose of the art [making] activity is learning it certainly is therapeutic but it is not art therapy. It must be true to both parts of its name: art and therapy. The primary goal of the art activity must be therapy... There are elements of education involved in art therapy and there are therapeutic aspects of art education. (p. 222)

When an art therapist teaches techniques, it is not for skill development, as in art education, but instead in the service of sublimation, feeling articulation,

communication, and self-expression. “In art therapy and art education, the *modality* (art) is the same, but the goal (therapy vs. education) is different (p. 223).

According to Landgarden, “... art therapy is not a discipline, it’s a modality. Art therapy is a way of getting there. It operates as a modality because you can adapt it to any theory” (as cited in Warren, 1995, p. 3). Robbins and Sibley (1976) contend that art therapy is a technique that serves several purposes. Projective techniques are used for diagnosis, research techniques are used for information gathering, and therapeutic techniques are used to enhance communication. The authors further explain that “technique is only one element of a network of component parts... and can be no substitute for sensitivity to the specific client population, relevant issues, goals, atmosphere, and setting” (p. 212).

### School Art Therapy

As early as 1975 in Texas and Wisconsin, school art therapy programs developed as extensions of art education and special education. Combining art, art therapy, art education, and special education backgrounds, some school art therapists worked with students with disabilities in therapeutic art programs (Anderson, 1975, 1992; Cohen, 1974), while others, who were art educators, introduced therapeutic art to school programs (Cane, 1951; Lowenfeld; 1957). Kramer (1958) writes that while “art therapy is not identical with art teaching, progressive art teaching methods are indispensable tools in a therapeutic art program” (as cited in Kramer, 1971, p. 8).

In 1980, the National Committee on Arts for the Handicapped sponsored a joint conference of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and AATA to consider the roles of art education and art therapy in providing art experiences for special needs students (Bush, 1997). According to Bush (1997), this meeting concretized the professional standing of art therapists in the schools and the education/training needs of art teachers serving students with disabilities. The 1985 monograph published by AATA, titled *Art Therapy in the Schools: A Position Paper of the American Art Therapy Association*, offered a definition, information, and guidelines for school art therapy programs. Moreover, this document outlined the purposes, principles, and standards that included the teachers' and therapists' roles in school art therapy programs. AATA provides a working definition of art therapy in a school setting by stating that

Art therapy is a psycho-educational therapeutic intervention that focuses upon art media as primary expressive and communicative channels. The art therapy process allows one to explore personal problems and potentials through nonverbal and verbal expression and to develop physical, emotional, and/or learning skills through therapeutic experiences...Art therapy can facilitate appropriate social behavior and promote healthy affective development so that children can become more receptive to learning, realizing their social and academic potential. Therefore, art therapy in a school...can be relevant to a child's education and social and emotional maturation. (n.p.)

Others have written on the unique role of art therapists in the school setting (Bush, 1997; Kramer, 1958; 1971; Naumberg, 1950; Packard & Anderson, 1976). Hite (1996) claims that school art therapists play numerous roles in school settings, including providing services to special education students, consulting to schools,

counseling, social work and psychology departments, or working for community agencies that deliver services in schools. “There are therapeutic art teachers in schools for students with special needs or there are art teachers whose classrooms are filled with students at-risk of dropping out of the educational systems” (p. 202). In *Art-Centered Education and Therapy for Children with Disabilities*, Anderson (1994), an art educator and art therapist, describes an interdisciplinary art-centered model for educators, teachers, and therapists working children with special needs in the school setting. Anderson considers an art-centered learning approach that integrates art concepts, media, and content with concepts in academic areas, compatible with whole language learning and discipline-based art education. Reciprocity between the art room and the regular classroom is a core concept in art-centered learning, as is collaboration between the classroom teacher and the art therapist or art teacher.

Since both art educators and art therapists who work with students in schools have extensive backgrounds in art, their roles are often confused. Students and other professionals often view the art therapist as the art teacher and vice versa. Bush (1997) traces the difference between “an art education therapist” and a “clinical art therapist” (p. 43). An art education therapist is certified in art education, creates and executes art lesson plans, identifies pathology in artwork, and treats potential problems. While clinical art therapists may work with regular and/or exceptional students in the school setting, they do not teach art and are not certified teachers. These clinicians use art psychotherapeutically and diagnostically and write individual education programs (IEP) with goals, objectives, and progress notes. Bush contends that most art teachers

are not equipped to fill this role because students with severe disabilities need an adapted art curriculum and non conventional teaching approaches that require an art therapist to facilitate. Packard and Anderson (1976) stress the importance of fostering a spirit of cooperation between art education and art therapy and argue “that clearer delineation between the two fields need not thwart the beneficial relationship between them” (p. 23); however, Bush clearly delineates the roles.

As Bush (2006) notes, the difference between art therapy and art education is that “art therapy helps to identify and reconcile emotional conflicts by emphasizing visual art processes and verbalizations as the primary modality for assessment and treatment” while “art education teaches children how to produce, evaluate, and look at art products” (n.p.). In the current study, I expected some overlap between art education and art therapy and I noted and described the art teachers’ perceptions.

### Contemporary Art Therapy

While contemporary art education addresses postmodern concerns, Kapitan (2000) notes that art therapy is a “postmodern form of socially responsive art rather than a distinct profession” (p. 111). Alter-Muri (1998) stresses the importance of educating art therapists about postmodern art and postmodernist approaches to art education to increase “the clinical application of art as healing” (p. 245). Scholars in art therapy like Moon (1990), McNiff (1992), and Betensky (1995) have incorporated postmodern concepts, specifically dialogue through and with imagery, but Alter-Muri explains that the difference in postmodern and modern art in art therapy is “the

integration of societal issues along with the permission granted to respond visually” (p. 247). Additionally, since visual meaning is socially constructed, the art therapy clients and art education students are challenged to deconstruct imagery and examine inconsistencies inherent in artwork (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996).

### Feminist Art Therapy

While feminist art education redefines the practice of art education, feminist art therapy seeks to reframe traditional art therapy theory and practice. Hogan (1997), a feminist art therapist, argues for an art therapy practice that critically analyzes representations of gender issues (p. 22). When gender is addressed in the art therapy process, art therapists can respond to the socio-cultural aspects of women’s lives. According to Hogan, the art therapy process can be thought of as “intellectual hegemony,” (p. 22) where “a dominant set of ideas exists in relationships, experience, and consciousness, in addition to political and economic institutions” (p. 22). Hogan contends that for art therapists, who practice in a discipline that is gendered, understanding the social construction of gender and the role that representation of women plays in the construction of gender differences are paramount. Hogan (1997) argues that “art therapy should be a reflexive and self-critical discipline,” and instead of applying universal theories to an individual, she suggests a return to “the notion of individuality” in connection with “representational systems, institutional, and discursive practices which create the understanding of subjectivity, illness, insanity, and health” (p. 37).

## Chapter Summary

This literature review presented topics related to the research questions, including notions of at-risk, alternative education, art education with students at-risk, contemporary art education, feminist art education, art education therapy, art therapy, school art therapy, contemporary art therapy, and feminist art therapy. The literature infers that these questions are important; therefore, in the current study I will be considering the following issues related to art education: how adolescent students at-risk and their art teachers characterize art education; the teaching and learning that occurs in art education classrooms with adolescent students at-risk in the alternative high schools; the roles art teachers' play in this type of setting; and the students'/art teachers' goals for art education. The next chapter will present the qualitative research methods employed in this study.



## chapter three METHODOLOGY

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Chapter 2 presented the literature related to this research study. Since *Art Education Pedagogy and Practice with Adolescent Students At-Risk in Alternative High Schools* seeks to explore how art teachers in alternative schools characterize art education and the teaching and learning that occurs in art education classrooms, this study used a qualitative approach. This chapter will discuss the methodology used to illuminate the worlds of art education for students and teachers in at-risk high school settings.

In their introduction to the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) identify five phases that define the research process, noting that “behind all but one of these phases stands the biographically situated researcher” (p. 19). For Robson (1997), the qualitative researcher must have an open, inquiring mind, good listening skills, and a sensitivity and responsiveness to contradictory evidence (pp. 167-168). My biography as a qualitative researcher is influenced by my life as an artist, art therapist, and art educator. My research position at the intersection of art education and art therapy requires that I integrate both roles into my research practice.

Qualitative research encompasses an array of designs, methodologies, and topics. Given Northern Illinois University’s (NIU) Institutional Review Board (IRB)

approval (see Appendix A), this qualitative study, *Art Education Pedagogy and Practice with Adolescent Students At-Risk in Alternative High Schools*, seeks to understand the phenomenon of art education with adolescent students at-risk in alternative school settings. A phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experiences of individuals about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 1998).

A variety of methods can be used in phenomenological research, including formal interviews, informal conversations, participant-observation, action research, analysis of personal texts, and focus groups. In this study, a three-interview structure, participant-observation, document review, and informal conversations with teachers, staff, and students were employed in two alternative high school settings.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify qualitative methods for researchers working in the constructivist paradigm. According to Schwandt (1994), the constructivist researcher believes that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it. “The inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors. To prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings; it is to offer the inquirer’s construction of the constructions of the actors one studies” (p. 118). To comprehend how art teachers characterize art education in alternative high school settings, this study interprets and explains how meanings are constructed through verbal communication, art, and the interactions of teachers, students and staff.

Calkins (1983) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer examples of naturalistic inquiry, including descriptive case studies, ethnographic oriented case studies, and

teaching case studies. Using a naturalistic inquiry framework, this study researched common and uncommon elements in two different art classrooms at two institutions with the purpose of understanding the content, pedagogy, and implications for art education in alternative school settings with youth who are labeled at-risk and art teachers who have minimal education to work with adolescent students at-risk. In this type of research Calkins (1983) suggests that

The researcher becomes a participant observer in a natural setting, spending at least a semester as live-in observer. Data are gathered through a range of methods, with overlapping information coming from field-based observations, formal and informal interviews, questionnaires, and analyses of written products. (pp. 130-31)

Deutsch (2004) describes being torn between having the participant-observer role, which demanded “participation without bias or influence” and one in which she was involved in her research participants’ lives. She argued that the “outsider within” role can often be a challenge but can also offer “unique opportunities for information gathering” (p. 898).

This research study investigated pedagogy and curricula in art education classrooms with adolescent students at-risk in alternative school settings. As a privileged Caucasian, middle-class, middle-aged Jewish female researcher entering alternative school settings composed of racially and ethnically diverse youth, I was an outsider. Through twice-weekly visits over the course of one semester, 95 observations were conducted in two art classrooms in designated alternative high schools. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the two art

teachers in order to understand what art education is and how it is delivered in these alternative high school settings. While there is no attempt to generalize to all alternative schools, the insights gleaned from these situations give both art educators and art therapists a sense of what exists and what may be needed to improve educational possibilities for students in similar situations.

### Sampling

The number of subjects is small in phenomenological research in order to gather in-depth information of each individual's experiences rather than measure specific variables (Creswell, 1998). Sampling in this study was both purposive and convenient. Robson (1997) explains that "the principle of selection in purposive sampling is the researcher's judgment as to the typicality or interest. A sample is built which enables the researcher to satisfy her specific needs in a project" (p. 265). Schwandt (1997) explains further that this approach to sampling is a way to locate research participants and sites and to base selections on researcher's knowledge and judgment and the purpose of the research. In addition, the researcher may select the nearest and most convenient persons to act as participants. In this study, research sites are both purposive and samples of convenience. Each setting is an alternative school with art education as a part of the curriculum and service for students who are considered at-risk. Sites were selected due to proximity and receptivity of art educators and administrators to the research project. Four alternative high schools were considered as possible research sites. However, due to difficulty gaining access,

only two sites were able to be used, making the sample smaller than originally planned.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that a key respondent is a “legitimate, committed and accepted member within the local context...who is willing to act as a member of the inquiry team. By virtue of their positions within the context such informants, can provide...an inside view of the norms, attitudes, constructions, processes and culture that characterize the local setting” (p. 258) and the gatekeepers are superintendents of school districts, directors of hospitals, or company presidents who have the authority to grant researchers access to sites. In this study a school principal, a vice president, and two art teachers became the gatekeepers and key respondents, respectively (see Appendix B Participant Consent Form and Appendix C Teacher Profile Form).

I started with four schools as potential research sites (all schools and teachers are identified with pseudonyms in this study). A letter explaining the research project was sent to each principal or administrator (see Appendix D Letter to Principal/Administrator). I met with the principal at Kozol and was immediately granted access. No paperwork was required since my research was approved by NIU’s IRB. I was only required to sign in each day with the security guard at the school’s front entrance.

At Birch, my initial research proposal documents were lost within the center and had to be resubmitted. After being granted verbal permission to begin and after completing the first two weeks of observations, Louise, my key respondent, called to

tell me that my visits were suspended until further notice because the center had not followed proper procedures. Embarrassed and frustrated, she made apologies for the center. I was disappointed. After phone calls between my committee and the center's CEO and vice president, a meeting was set up to clarify the problem and discuss my research proposal. In this meeting with Louise and her administrative vice president, I was informed that I was not *really* doing research because it did not resemble the quantitative research that was familiar to them. After some explanation, completing internship paperwork, purchasing a name tag, and agreeing to provide the center with a one-page recommendation report describing the strengths and weaknesses of the art education program, I was given permission to return.

A third possible research site that I visited was closed by the state.

At the fourth possible research site, I was given approval verbally and in writing by the school's child director (principal) and the executive administrator. I was pleased to be in this site because the art teacher was interested and supportive and her principal commended my dissertation topic, explaining that it was the most relevant that he had seen in a long time. When I began arranging my observation schedule in my three sites, this art teacher requested a tuition reimbursement from the university in exchange for me doing research in her classroom. I explained that the university prohibited any compensation from the institution to research participants or sites; however, I suggested that her school could apply to become a student teacher placement site and as a cooperating teacher, she could receive a tuition waiver. I also offered to share resources, my research results, and assist in any way that I could in

her classroom. I was later informed by the art teacher that the school's social worker had reservations that my presence would be a distraction and a liability in the setting. This social worker's opinion trumped all previous approvals, so access was denied. The art teacher tried to negotiate other possibilities, such as a shorter observation length, but this did not fit my research protocol. She offered her sincere apologies and suggested that we might collaborate in the future, which I appreciated; however, I was particularly disappointed about the power the social worker had on my gaining access. Moreover, I knew her professionally and felt that she misunderstood my research and the potential benefits to the art teacher and the school. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain, gaining access is the most difficult part of doing qualitative naturalistic inquiry because gatekeepers (in this study, a principal, a vice president and a social worker) have the authority to grant, retract, and reject access to sites (p. 258). Gaining access proved challenging but worth the frustration and time delays.

### Culture/Population

This research project was situated in two alternative schools. A brief description of each site follows. Chapter 4 will describe each site in more detail.

Table 1 includes research sites, key respondents and gatekeepers for this study. Table 2 provides demographic information for this study.

Table 1

Sites/Respondents/Gatekeeper

Research sites	Key Respondents	Gate Keeper
<b>Site A:</b> Kozol	Mona Lisa Art Teacher	Principal
<b>Site B:</b> Birch	Louise Nevelson Art Teacher	Vice President

Setting A: Kozol Community Education Center

The alternative high school at Kozol is one of five high school diploma-granting programs for a large urban school district located in northern Illinois. This school serves a diverse population of about 1500 students, ages 16 to 21. Some of its unique attributes include day care and infant care for teen parents, flexible scheduling, and an open campus. Class size is limited to 15. Students have individualized learning structures and are expected to be self-directed learners. Strict attendance policies are enforced with support services available for students. To attend Kozol students must have at least an 8.0 reading level and have officially dropped out of their home high school (M. Lisa, Personal Communication, 9/27/2007).

Setting B: Birch Substance Abuse Treatment Center

Birch is a not-for-profit organization that provides a full continuum of addiction treatment services for children, youth, adults and families. The center is accredited with Full Standards Compliance by the Joint Commission on Accreditation

Table 2

Demographics

School	Teacher Demographics				Student Demographics					
	Teacher	Yrs taught	Race/Sex	Student Age Range	Student Race/Ethnicity	%	Sex	Class type	Class size	Normal year in school
Kozol	Mona Lisa	10	White/F	15-19	Af/Am. Hispanic Caucasian Other	32% 16% 41% 11%	Co-ed	Elective, ART I - ART III Multi- age Multi-level	15 Max.	9-12
Birch	Louise Nevelson	7	White/F	14-18	Af/Am. Hispanic Caucasian Other	7% 1% 90% 2%	Single sex classes	Required, Multi- age Multi-level	13 Max.	8-12

of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) and is nationally recognized as a premiere provider of treatment services. Some of the center's unique attributes include life skills and problem-solving groups; recreational and social activities; an introduction to Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Cocaine Anonymous; and an on-site accredited school with special education teachers and one art teacher. Teachers coordinate lessons with students' home schools and assist students in maintaining their school work while in treatment (L. Nevelson, Personal Communication, October 10, 2007).

### Data Collection

Data collection in case study research usually involves three strategies of interviewing, observing, and analyzing documents. On-site investigation of the case involves observation of what is going on, talking informally and formally with people, and examining documents and materials that are a part of the context (Merriam, 1998, p. 137). In this study, multiple strategies were employed, including the following: participant-observation, including visual field notes and textual (word) notes; a three-interview structure with teachers (see Appendix E Interview Questions); informal conversations with teachers, students, and staff; and review of ordinary instructional documents, including curriculum, lesson plans, and students' art work. Additionally, document review included an interrogation of my own visual and poetic responses to observations, experiences, and events that occurred while I was a participant-observer.

Using these multiple methods of data collection triangulated and validated the findings. As Patton (1990) notes,

Multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective...by using a combination of observation, interviewing, and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings. (p. 244)

Eisner (1991) uses the term “structural corroboration” to describe the “confluence of multiple sources of evidence or the recurring of instances that support a conclusion [and suggests that in order] for a study to be structurally corroborated the researcher must put together a constellation of bits and pieces of evidence that substantiates the conclusions one wants to draw” (p. 55).

Structural corroboration is a form of triangulation that “allows the researcher to relate multiple kinds of data to either support or contradict the interpretation or evaluation of a state of affairs” (p. 110). Triangulation is crucial in naturalistic studies such as this one and “as the study unfolds and particular pieces of information come into light, steps should be taken to validate each against at least one other source (for example a second interview) and/or method (for example an observation in addition to an interview)” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 283). In this qualitative study, the data were derived from two different art classrooms, interviews with two art teachers, document analysis of curriculum, lesson plans, students’ art work and my art work, and informal conversations with teachers, students, and staff. A summary of data collected included

visual field notes, textual field notes, interview transcripts (personal art history, current pedagogical experience, and reflective meanings), a play, and poems.

The data were structurally corroborated by looking for characteristically recurrent themes, patterns, behaviors, or situations. According to Eisner (1991), the educational researcher's aim is to "seek confluence of evidence that breeds credibility that allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations, and conclusions" (p. 110). Table 3 identifies the relationships between the research questions and data collection methods.

Table 3

Research Questions/Data Collection

Research Questions	Participant Observation	Interviews	Document Review	Informal Conversations
1. How do students and teachers in alternative high school settings characterize art education?	X	X	X	X
2. What teaching and learning occurs in art education classrooms with adolescent students at-risk in the alternative high school setting?	X	X	X	X
3. What are the roles of the art teacher in this type of setting?	X	X		X
4. What are the goals of the art teacher?	X	X	X	X
5. What are the students' goals?	X			X

## Observation

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) note that “all observation involves the observer’s participation in the world being studied” (p. 49). Robson (1997) further clarifies that “a key feature of participant observer is that the observer seeks to become some kind of member of the observed group. This involves not only a physical presence and a sharing of life experiences, but also entry into their social and symbolic world through learning their social conventions and habits, their use of language and nonverbal communication...the observer also has to establish some role within the group” (p. 314).

I was a participant-observer in two alternative schools and observed students and teachers and interacted with them. Robson (1997) suggests beginning the participant-observer role with a descriptive observation that describes the initial story or narrative. This description covers nine areas, including space, actors, activities, objects, acts, events, time, goals, and feelings (p. 320). Detailed descriptions of initial observations are discussed in Chapter 4 of this study. Subsequent observations may take different forms during different phases of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.275). Initially, they may be unstructured to assist the researcher in increasing her implicit knowledge and developing an understanding of what is significant. During the latter stages of observation when information increases, insights may become more focused. In this study, observations to understand what art education is and how it is delivered in these alternative high school settings occurred twice-weekly for three class periods at each school over the course of one semester during the Fall semester

beginning in August 2007 and concluding in January 2008 (see Appendix F Observation Sheet).

I was at Birch in the morning and Kozol for afternoon classes. Initially I watched, listened, and took field notes to capture what was important. Insights became more focused after analyzing the data, creating and reflecting my own art work, making subsequent site visits, and clarifying information with each of the art teacher respondents.

#### Arts-based Research

According to Lather (1988), “the research process [is] a powerful place to go for praxis to the extent we can formulate research designs that change people by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their situations in the world” (pp. 23-24). Feminist scholars (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004; Reinharz, 1993) encourage feminist researchers to self-reflect and adopt a reflexive stance. By writing reflexive analyses of their work, feminist researchers can elucidate challenges, reveal social locations and identities, and allow others to build upon their experience. In this study, reflexive art making was utilized in addition to creative writing to clarify the research process, synthesize the data, and reveal positionality and identities in much the same way these feminist scholars suggest feminist researchers use writing for feminist research.

Arts-based research is the methodical use of the artistic process that includes the making of artistic expression in all the forms of the creative arts as a primary way

of understanding and experience by researchers and those they involve in their studies (McNiff, 1998). Using arts-based research is a relatively new phenomenon in the field of qualitative research; however, it was an important part of the data gathering and data analysis process in this dissertation.

Sullivan (2005) notes that

If research involves big questions then these inquiries will encompass various structures of phenomena, networks of relationships, passions, and perspectives. The belief that creative processes are complex offers important insight into human understanding. Therefore, research procedures need to be inventive yet grounded in rigorous practice. (p. 104)

Art making by its very nature is a creative process through which the artist/researcher examines and clarifies multiple relationships, patterns, and meanings during the research process. The artist/researcher looks for order out of chaos, sees micro and macro relationships, and views process and patterns in the research data (Sullivan, 2005). When making art, I sorted, resorted, and played with the data, which is one of the “basic rules for dealing with qualitative data” (Robson, 1997, p. 377). In my research, I “construct[ed] readings of the data that move[d] beyond descriptive accounts and realistic tales to include visual images that contribute[d] to the interpretive conception that frame[d] the narrative (Sullivan, 2005, p. 199).

I recorded and documented my observations, experiences, and responses visually and in written form as an ongoing form of inquiry. See Figures 2 and 3 for illustrative visual memos. I employed the arts (creative writing, collage, and poetry) as a way of reflecting on the data and my experiences as a researcher in 84, 4” x 6”

collages, 3 poems, and several drawings. As a non-discursive language, my art work became a fundamental part of my data set and an important cognitive justification for the use of my visual field notes and memos.



Figure 2. *Visual Memo, 5/23/2008*

### Interviews

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest that “the interview has become a taken-for-granted feature of our mediated, mass media culture. It is a mediated text, a site where power, gender, race and class intersect” (pp. 47- 48). As mediated texts, “the most beneficial approaches are interactive interviews in which researchers use self disclosure, multiple interviews, group interviews and negotiation of interpretations”



Figure 3. *Teenscapes*, Visual Memo, 4/6/2008

(Lather, 1988, pp. 569 -581). In keeping with the phenomenological conceptual framework of this study, multiple interviews, which are “somewhat directed and phenomenological in nature” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 73), were used. Robson (1997) advocates the use of semi-structured interviews that have a predetermined set of questions, but the order can be modified based on the interviewer’s perception of what seems appropriate at the time. Question wording can be altered and explanations offered to particular questions, and other questions can be omitted or added.

Two art teachers in the two alternative high schools were interviewed by adapting Seidman’s (2006) structure for in-depth phenomenological interviewing. Figure 4 is a visual memo illustrating this process.

A unique feature of this approach to qualitative research is conducting three separate interviews with each participant. Seidman recommends a ninety-minute format spaced three to seven days apart as optimal for in-depth interviewing; however, he explains that alterations to format, length, and spacing of interviews are acceptable “as long as a structure is maintained that allows participants to reconstruct their experience within the context of their lives” (p. 15). In this study each art teacher respondent was interviewed three times. According to Seidman, “in the process of conducting the three interviews, the interviewer must maintain a delicate balance between providing enough openness for the participants to tell their stories and enough focus to allow the interview structure to work” (p. 13). To establish the context in the first interview, the interviewer invites the participants to share as much as they can that pertains to the topic up to the present time. The focus of the second interview is



Figure 4. *Visual Memo*, 10/13/2007

on specific details of the participants' current experience related to the study topic.

The purpose of the third, and final, interview is to “ask participants to reflect on the meaning of their experience” (pp. 18-19). This final interview encourages the capacity of participants to reconstruct details and symbolize their experience and in the process impart meaning to them (Seidman, 2006). A list of prepared questions served as a guide for the interviews in this study that were conducted with each art teacher in their classrooms at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester (see Appendix E Interview Questions). Questions were divided among the three interviews, and probes were utilized when needed. These interview trilogies addressed personal art history, current art pedagogical experience, and participants' reflective meaning. Data from each interview were highly personal and self-reflective. A modified third interview

format was used in this study. Participants were asked to select miscellaneous beads from a basket to facilitate the construction knowledge and reflection of meaning. Each participant carefully chose and arranged the beads into a three-dimensional metaphorical representation of her experience and talked about the meaning of her bead selections and its application to her pedagogy and practice. The art teachers' bead creations were photographed and given back to each respondent to keep.

During all three interviews art teacher respondents were constructing meaning; however, the final interview specifically focused on a reflective meaning-making process that translates experience into language (Vygotsky, 1987). The addition of the bead process as a part of the third interview further enhanced meaning making in a way that artists and art educators often think – through visual and verbal viewing and making art.

Each interview was audio taped and lasted approximately 30 - 45 minutes. Follow-up questions were employed when needed. Interviews were transcribed and coded. Pseudonyms and initials were used to maintain the confidentiality of the sites and key participants. At the close of each interview, Lincoln (1985) suggests summarizing or “playing back” for the participants what was understood. As an ongoing element of the research process, the data were checked by key participants for accuracy and to provide opportunities to validate my understandings, allowing new information to be added and establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba; Stake, 1995).

## Data Analysis

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that

Not much can be said about data analysis in advance of the study. What is important to recognize is that data analysis is not an inclusive phase that can be marked out as occurring at some singular time during inquiry. Data analysis must begin with the very first data collection in order to facilitate emergent design, grounding of theory and emergent structure of later data collection phases. (p. 242)

Merriam (1998) contends that

The researcher begins with the individual stories of each participant in the study and then, through the analytic process, takes the story apart and puts it back together in a way that tells the story of all the participants. The challenge in grounded theory is not to impose the common story (identity theory) but to enable that story to emerge from the perspectives of participants and truly reflect their individual and chosen identity (identity as personal story). (p. 176)

This qualitative study produced a large amount of data. To manage the data, observational field notes were coded after each class observation. At the end of each week, collected data were reviewed and both written and visual field memos were created to reflect on salient points. Through making and reflecting on my own art work, I processed, organized, analyzed, and integrated research data.

Data were analyzed using grounded theory. Grounded theory is anchored in the words and experiences of the research participants. The data were categorized by considering themes and repeating patterns with the intention of maintaining the integrity of individual stories while simultaneously reflecting on the dimensions of each case as a whole.

In this study, Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparison method was employed to analyze the data gathered, including ordinary instructional materials like curriculum, lesson plans, student art work, from the two research sites and interview trilogy with two art educators. Utilizing this method that generated theoretical properties of the category, the researcher begins thinking about the full range of the category, its dimensions, possibilities, conditions, major consequences, and relationship to other categories.

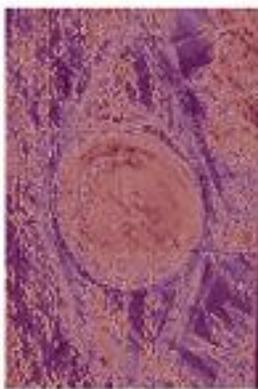
According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the constant comparison method of data analysis is "a means of deriving (grounding) theory, not just a means of processing data" (p. 105). The four stages are 1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, 2) integrating categories and their properties, 3) delimiting the theory and 4) writing the theory (p. 105). This method is a fluid, continuously developing and analytic process.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded for patterns and compared with patterns found in field notes and field memos. From coded data, information was structurally corroborated and grounded theory emerged.

Once data were analyzed, an in-depth accounting or "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the data and the results were described in narrative form. Chapter 4 will provide a thorough and complete description of study findings and research data. This accounting will detail what the reader will need to know to fully understand the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125).

## Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the research methodology utilized in the study. Chapter 4 will report the research findings.



## chapter four FINDINGS

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

Chapter 3 explained the qualitative research methods utilized in the study, *Art Education Pedagogy and Practice with Adolescent Students At-Risk in Alternative High Schools*. This chapter reports study findings in the form of a play, titled *T...O...R...N...*, and through the two participant teachers' student art work collections.

As a strategy to create critical sites of learning, performance art pedagogy makes it possible for all observers to become participants, and all participants, creators of cultural learning. Its multicentric and dialogic processes recognize the cultural experiences, memories and perspectives – participants' multiple voices – as viable content. (Garioan, 2000, p. 67)

While sitting in classrooms collecting my research data, I imagined my participants, two art teachers and their students in two alternative high school settings, as actors performing in a play. As students changed classes and their art teachers prepared for their next class, I visualized actors quickly moving props and sets and assuming their stage positions. I imagined myself as the audience. At times I became part of the play and the dialogue. I was living performance art pedagogy in which all participants were collectively creating knowledge. In *Performing Pedagogy*, art educator Garioan (2000) considers that teaching and learning is performance art and “performance art pedagogy is the praxis of postmodern theory” (p. 10) that “facilitates

agency through self expression, acknowledges identity work as a significant content in arts education [and] creates discourses and practices that are multiethnic, participatory, indeterminate, interdisciplinary, reflexive, and intercultural” (p. 122).

Eisner (1991) argues that “thick description is an effort aimed at interpretation, at getting below the surface to that enigmatic aspect of human condition: the construction of meaning” (p. 15). Furthermore, description, as a part of educational criticism, allows the reader to envision a place or a process and “the text should also enable readers to vicariously participate in the events described” (p. 89). It is critical for the researcher to “create...in written form a structure that will carry meanings forward through descriptive prose...artistry in the treatment of narrative language...shaping text, and hearing its cadences” (p. 89).

What follows are my research findings performance. The dramatic format provides a structure to thickly describe (Geertz, 1973) the qualitative data and represent the stories of the art educator respondents and their students. The script includes the playwright’s note, the cast descriptions, the settings, and one act, including scenes and director’s notes. The multiple voices and words of participants are blended to form the portrait of art education I observed of students who have been identified as at-risk and who are being educated in alternative high school settings. The teacher and student dialogues are the data taken verbatim from field note observations. The narrator's voice is both a description and interpretation of the data. This drama also illuminates the fluid boundaries between the professions and practices of art education and art therapy.

### Playwright's Note

*T...O...R...N...*, a play in one act, takes place in the fall of 2007 in two midwestern alternative high schools. The play presents qualitative research findings naturalistically in narrative form. The main characters in the play are two art teachers and their art students, and like the play *Our Town*, the narrator's voice is also ever-present. Their stories and the relationships within the classrooms are told through both words and images. The teachers have selected their own pseudonyms. To protect the anonymity of the students, the student characters in this piece are given pseudonyms. The schools' names have also been changed for the same reason. Dialogue is taken from directly from students' verbalizations and conversations in the two classrooms. The art work in the play is from the collections of the art teacher respondents.

### CAST

The art teachers:

Mona Lisa: Art Teacher, Kozol Community Education Center, a thirty-something single female with no children, the youngest of 11 children. She describes herself as an artist, an introvert, and a right-brain thinker (see Figure 5). Before coming to Kozol, Mona worked with students at-risk in an aviation program sponsored through Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and as an art teacher in a science and art magnet school. These experiences prepared her to work in an alternative high school. A certified art teacher for 10 years and working on her national board certification, she

believes “art is about open communication in a visual form that leads to discussion about issues ... a hands-on way to deal with things, to think about things, and a way to do things differently.” She enjoys nature, painting, raising horses, and living in the country.



Figure 5. *Mona Lisa's Desk.*

Louise: Art Teacher, Birch Substance Abuse Treatment Center, a thirty-something, married female with three children, ages 6, 2, and 1 (see Figure 6). While in college Louise volunteered in an after-school art program for students at-risk. She believes that all students are at-risk and have unique, special needs. Her experience comes from her degree in art and regular education. Special education knowledge

comes from on-the-job training – working with these students every day and attending classes on behavior management and de-escalation. A certified art teacher who has taught art for seven years, she believes “art is a part of everyday life, and education in art is to get students to believe in themselves.” She is a professional painter who loves nature and mentoring her students.



Figure 6. *Louise's Desk.*

Narrator: Lisa Kay, Artist/ Art Therapist/ Educator/ Researcher, NIU.

The students: Male and female, freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors, ages 14 -19 who represent a microcosm of teenagers, a cross section of social, gender, and ethnic groups. Most are expressive – visually and verbally – although some are quiet and withdrawn. The students are characterized by their teachers as having negative self-perceptions, including very low self-esteem. Their teachers describe

them as independent, creative, immature, withdrawn, depressed, angry, discouraged, talkative, unfocused, belligerent, insecure, obnoxious, frustrated, and needy. The teachers say that their students come from dysfunctional families with minimal parental involvement in school or their lives. The students are dealing with a cadre of family issues, including abuse, divorce, abandonment, alcoholism, drug use and addiction, and/or mental illness. They are coping with many social issues, including gangs, guns, violence – community and school, addiction, drugs, pregnancy and teen parenting. Some are living independently, going to school, working, and parenting themselves – sometimes a child and sometimes a parent. Others attend a residential treatment school for substance abuse. Many are taking art for the first time.

### The Settings

Kozol Community Educational Center: This alternative school is housed in an old building originally constructed in the 1920s as a middle school. The school is surrounded by asphalt and cement, with little to no green space. It sits amid moderately maintained houses of the same era. Situated in an urban multiethnic neighborhood, the structure is monumental – gray brick with carved stone gargoyles of children's faces at the corners of the facade. A uniformed security guard sits behind a desk located immediately inside the front door checking student identification badges and writing visitor passes. It is not unusual for the principal, walky-talky in hand, and a police officer to be at the school entrance, nor is it unusual to see a police car or an ambulance outside the front door. The interior of the school has its original dark oak

wood molding, ceramic tiles, hardwood floors, large casement windows, long corridors, and wide staircases. The building has many beautiful mosaic back-splashes designed and crafted by WPA artists that frame the water fountains and serve as unacknowledged memorials to the time the school was originally built as a “regular” district school. One of these fountains, located outside the art classroom, is used by students as the water source for everything, including painting projects.

Visual art, like graphic arts, music, and business classes, is an elective at Kozol. Students must take one fine arts elective: either visual art or music. If they don't like music, then they take art. And usually there is a waiting list to get into the program because only 15 students are allowed in each class. The class size is small due to the limited size of the art education classroom and the alternative education philosophy that advocates a low teacher-to-student ratio to promote one-to-one attention and individual instruction. The curriculum is self-paced. Students are expected to work independently. The curriculum adheres to district and state goals and is structured on learning the elements and principles of art. The curriculum is divided into six sections; each section has a packet of information related to the art concept for students to study and complete. Packets are designed to be completed in one class period. After completing each art packet, students take a short quiz. Then they select from two different art projects in each section. Using formal elements and principles, students create artwork that has personal meaning and connects to them in some way. When they finish each art piece and a self-critique, students are ready to start another packet. After completing all six, they earn their art credit. Students are required to

have 60 hours of instructional time to earn each credit; therefore, even if they finish required assignments early, students must remain in art class after finishing the Art I curriculum. Often students choose to continue in Art II or Art III.

Birch Substance Abuse Treatment Center: This center was originally built in 1916 by the Birch family, who donated their homestead and land for the purpose of a school and an orphanage for boys. The old building has been replaced with a new high-end facility that resembles a lodge more than a hospital or school and which sits on several acres in a country setting amid woods, lakes, gardens and trees. A long winding road leads to the building, which uses huge wooden beams to hold a steeply pitched roof. Flowering plants and shrubs are planted at the building entrance and throughout the well-maintained campus. On the south side of the building is a Japanese serenity/meditation garden with a walking path around a lake with bridges and benches. A wooded area with dozens of species of indigenous trees frames the garden. The inside of the building is warmly decorated with natural earth tones and a stone fireplace with a large mantel, which is a focal point upon entering this building. Framed fine art and photographs adorn the walls. Two female receptionists in ordinary dress greet staff and visitors. Visitors are directed to a sign-in log and escorted into the main part of the building. Staff enters by swiping ID badges. Locked doors mark the entrance to a long carpeted hallway that leads to the education center.

The art education program is an integral part of the school program at Birch. All students are required to participate in art class and are given grades for their participation. During the majority of the treatment program males and females are

separated; therefore, all classes, including art, are gendered. Classes average 12-13 and meet daily throughout the week. When there is a school holiday, art class usually still occurs.

Some curricular decisions are based on economics, others on space. A limited budget impacts the supplies available for art making, while limited space requires Louise to rotate when students work with certain materials, like clay. Storage space for work in progress is at a premium. The curriculum combines the elements and principles of art with technical instruction to facilitate emotional expression. Because the curriculum adapts to the needs of the class and “is all about them,” Louise integrates topics of interest to her students so they feel more connected to the lesson. She rotates and recycles half a dozen or more of her lesson plans. Some lessons, according to Louise, may seem childish because these students have not experienced typical arts and craft activities, like leaf collecting and drawing or pumpkin carving, as children. And they lack confidence in their art abilities and have low self-esteem, so the curriculum is filled with success-oriented lessons that focus on students' positive strengths and self-identity. Activities of the center, like poster, slogan, and decorating contests, are interwoven into art lessons. Some lessons focus directly on recovery issues. Louise works with some students and their counselors on individual art projects that deal with emotions. The center calls these lessons “treatment work.” All work counts toward their class participation. Louise helps students enrolled in art classes in their home school to keep up with their art assignments while in treatment and communicates directly with art teachers at their home school. While the art work

students complete for their “regular” art classes is graded, most art assignments in this alternative school are not.

### Act I

*“A room hung with pictures is a room hung with thoughts.”*  
English artist, Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)

(It’s warm outside and it’s extremely warm in the art education classroom at Kozol. The heat is on in the building; the sun is generating more heat through the large windows. Examples of student artwork hang on the walls (see Figure 7). A bulletin/chalk board displays daily announcements and class/school information. Quotes that read *“Artists create the world they imagine”* and *“An artist is a person who uses imagination and skill to communicate ideas in a visual form”* frame the teacher’s desk. )



Figure 7: *Dragonflies*, Art Student, From the Collection of Mona Lisa.

**Narrator:** Students enter the multi-grade/multi-level art classroom – some with MP3 players and headphones in place, tired and sleepy, most wearing huge, invisible backpacks – filled with their emotions, hardships, struggles, and their troubles. They may self-identify as losers, quitters, and/or addicts. There is minimal difference

between students here and in other regular traditional schools. There is an art studio atmosphere in the class. Art supplies, for students' use, are organized in drawers, on open shelves, and in cabinets or storage closets. Students are simultaneously working at multiple levels on various assignments with different media. The teacher moves from student to student checking on their progress, demonstrating lesson(s), offering technical assistance, encouragement and/or support.

**Louise:** Every student has special needs; every student needs special attention. All are *at-risk* in some way and are typical of high school teenagers in the Midwest.

### Scene 1: Beginning

“It is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance, and  
I know of no substitute for the force and beauty of its process.”

Henry James

**Narrator:** Students enter the classroom talking to one another, getting settled in their seats and at their tables, asking questions, and taking their work out. The first five minutes of class the teacher reviews the class list, adds new students to it, and begins explaining expectations to her students. The art teacher gets students working right away. She introduces a basic introductory lesson that uses their names. The personal identity project is success-oriented, helps them relax, and promotes the belief that they are capable of creating art.

**Louise:** “All right class, let's get started. Sign in and take your seats. Who's not here today? Who's finished with their projects and who needs my help?  
Who is the new kid?”

**Louise:** (*aside*) I get my students comfortable with drawing and expressing themselves through art. This is especially helpful for those students who lack confidence as artists and have low self-esteem. As their visual expression develops and they move through the art education program, I introduce them to metaphor (representing their ideas and thoughts via art and symbols).

(*Mona enters stage left and talks to Louise and remains on stage*)

**Mona Lisa:** (*aside*) I have to be careful because the administration in my district doesn't want students to be **too** expressive. This is hard to do in art. I tend to guide students' toward nature as a theme because of the limitations the school administration places on content in art education. Nature is safe or innocuous. (See Figure 8).



Figure 8. *Leaves*, Art Student, From the Collection of Louise.

**Louise:** (*aside*) I guide my students toward nature because I believe that nature does connect my students to beauty and the natural world around them, which is important. I focus my students toward positive images, themes, and aspects of themselves. I explain that it's time to have a different focus. It helps them re-think how they define themselves and their life situations. We sometimes do projects that incorporate their names or initials and emphasize self-identity.

**Ben:** I've been told I was artistically challenged.

**Louise:** By whom?

**Ben:** Everybody – my parents, my teachers, my friends.

**Adam:** I'm an art hater!

**Louise:** Hater? That's really a strong statement.

**Adam:** I do.

**Kyle:** Me, too.

**Louise:** Are you just going to sit there today?

**Ben:** I've never been an artistic person. It's hard to think of ideas. I'm **not** an artist.

**Adam:** I can't draw.

**Louise:** Can't or won't? Have you ever tried?

**Adam:** Yes, and every time it looks dumb.

**Kyle:** I'm so lazy. I said, I'm not an art person.

**Adam:** These are stupid projects. I hate them.

*(Images of students' kaleidoscope designs are projected on back wall of the stage. See Figure 9)*



Figure 9. *Kaleidoscope*, Art Student, From the Collection of Louise.

**Narrator:** I call it “art angst.” The students describe their dread, fear, anxiety, and sometimes anguish associated with making art but I call it art angst because one student showed me the kaleidoscope design he made using the word “angst” to represent his feelings about his life. This is partly like the art anxiety that students may experience in regular art classes but for these kids in the alternative high school settings, the emotions may be more exaggerated. Maybe not. Louise said these kids are like kids at any other school. We’ll see... These students have strong feelings about

expressing their thoughts and ideas or revealing anything about who they are. Some don't like to get messy. Many are frustrated because they have never “done” art or have been criticized when they have. This may be just like “ordinary” art education students in “regular” schools.

**Narrator:** Mona is demonstrating shading to one student. Another student holds up her work for the teacher to see. Louise is helping a student with a project and responds to another student's request for help.

**K.G.:** Mrs. N., Help me please, this is not turning out right.

**Liam:** I can't do this. Can I..?

**Jake:** I'm finished, look.

**Louise:** I see, I see. Liam, I want to see you try first, and then I will help you.

**Liam:** I'm going to try to do it my way.

**Louise:** Great! I know you can do it. It's looking awesome.

**Matt:** I tried and I can't; I hate this shit, it's too messy.

**Narrator:** Mona spends individual time with this student. Several students watch as she assists a student even if they are not doing the same project. Then, Mona systematically moves around the classroom working with as many students as possible during the class.

**Rosa:** My work is ugly!

**Mona Lisa:** What don't you like about it? May I help you with it?

**Rosa:** I'm highly upset with this drawing; it's not working.

**Latoya:** Ms. Lisa, Ms. Lisa, Ms. Lisa, I don't like this. I need help.

**Mona Lisa:** OK, OK, Hang on, I'll be right there, let me finish here.

**Louise:** (*aside*) My classes are small – 12-13 students per class. This allows me to make contact with each student, each class, either about their artwork or about themselves. They trust me and feel comfortable with me. One difference from other schools is that in my classes male and female students are segregated. The center mandates this practice and I like it because it seems to decrease some negative social behaviors. I find that my students take more risks, especially the girls, in art making since they don't have to deal with the opposite sex. On the whole, they are more receptive and open to teaching and learning.

**Mona Lisa :** (*aside*) My class size is rarely more than 15. This is due to the educational philosophy of the alternative school and the size of my classroom. I couldn't fit one more student in. It does allow me to give individual instruction and personal attention to my students, which I really like. I try to work in some way with each student every day. I would find this difficult to do if I had a class of 30 students. It's important for my students to know that I am there for each and every one of them.

I think by doing this I develop rapport with my students and it facilitates a sense of mutual respect.

### **Scene 2: Working things out**

**Narrator:** Students, aides, and special education teachers are coming in and out of the art classroom. Students are humming and singing and talking about things that have happened the night before. A student asks permission to turn on the radio. The teacher explains that as long as they are working and the volume level does not go above 13, they can listen to music. John Mayer’s song “Waiting for the World to Change” is playing... *“me and all my friends, we're all misunderstood, they say we stand for nothing and, there's no way we ever could... we just feel like we don't have the means, to rise above it. So we keep waiting, waiting for the world to change, we keep waiting on the world to change.”*

**Liam:** Hey that’s a good song. It describes us. Nobody understands us.

**Jake:** Yeah, I get in trouble a lot, but I'm really not all that bad. Who ain't bad in school? Who doesn't get in trouble at home?

**Narrator:** Students are involved in finishing up many different art tasks: doing a collage, making a “god box” (spirituality collage box), or painting a name design. The teacher is explaining a new assignment that combines warm and cool colors and promotes positive self-identity. She tells the others teachers that when the majority of her students are finished with one project that she introduces something new. That way nobody gets too bored and she keeps things interesting.

**Louise:** I want you to think of a word that represents something positive about you.

**Mike:** I can't think of a word.

**Louise:** A good word, a positive word.

**Ben:** Me, either.

**Louise:** What describes you?

**Adam:** Girls, hot, ah, money, gangs, addict, alcoholic.

**Louise:** No, I want positive descriptive words. NO negative imaging. Think about words that represent how you feel or something that is important to you. Draw that word then, design the composition, use warm colors for the foreground and cool colors for the background. Does every one understand what I'd like you to do?

**Narrator:** Students nod their heads in understanding and begin to draw words like *happiness, empty, peace, success* or *intense* on their paper. (See Figure 10).

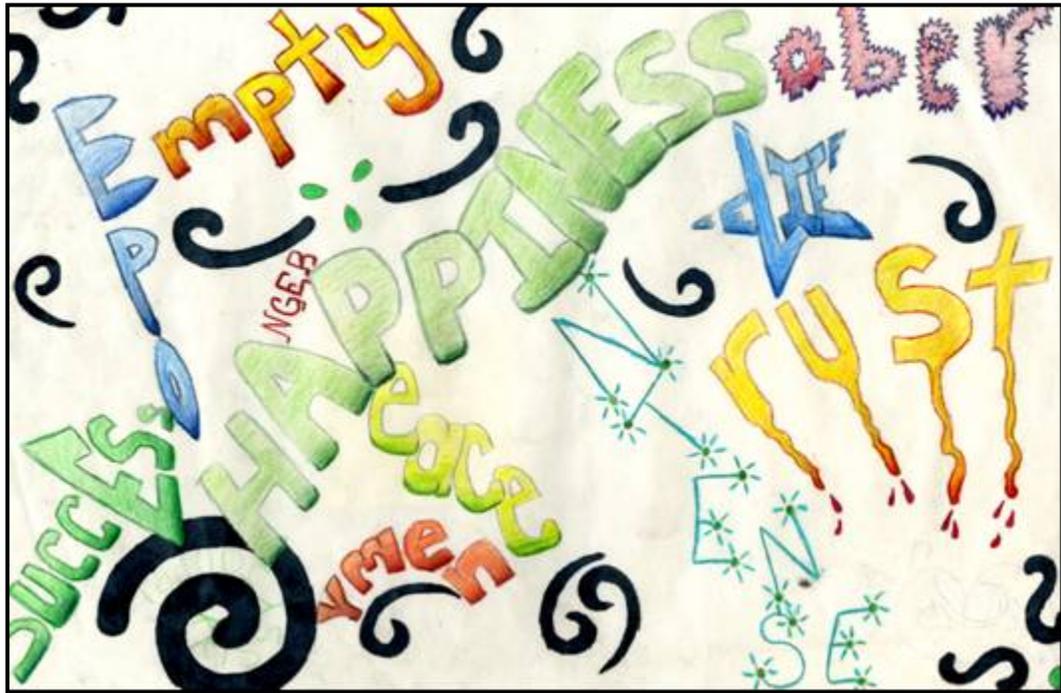


Figure 10. *Word Design*, Art Student, From the Collection of Louise.

**Louise:** *(aside)* I give my students flexibility within my structure but I combine teaching art technique with the expression of emotions. This is what's important in art education for me. My curriculum is rotating and I recycle my lesson plans. There are times I must base my teaching decisions on my budget and space. While I focus more on class needs as a whole, I assign some projects for individual students called “treatment work.” We don't have IEPs but I am on students' treatment plans. I give them credit for this work and sometimes their home school art teacher does also.

**Mona Lisa:** *(aside)* Budget and space impacts my curriculum. I have a limited budget. Don't all art teachers? I waited for months for get my supplies for this school year. I alter assignments because when I don't have the supplies students need, there are some techniques I just can not teach. I don't have a sink in my art classroom. My students ask, *how can you teach art without a sink?* It's not ideal but we manage. My curriculum is designed, for the most part, to be self-explanatory and self-guided. I have created packets covering the formal elements of art that include pertinent information, worksheets, quizzes and a self-critique. Giving my students freedom within the curriculum yields discipline and internal control. They usually complete my class within 9-12 weeks working 5 in class hours per week.

**Narrator:** Students are moving about the classroom to the restroom and to the library to search for images for projects. Counselors are looking for students and consulting

with the teacher. The loudspeaker publicizes Red Ribbon week activities and announces the quote of the day, “*Curiosity has its own reason for existing – Albert Einstein.*” No one seems to pay much attention.

**Mona Lisa:** (*aside, talks to audience*) Art is a social way of working things out. I assist them in finding their own way – in art and in life. When they are working on art assignments in class, they are working things out in their lives. We get conversations between one another. This gives them a sense of trust in me and in each other. It’s not always about art; it’s about reaching them for that day. They’ve been kicked out of other classes or kicked out of the house. I want them to open up, have a positive attitude about school and realize that art and education are about them. My students feel that they never really match up to others, their peers, and that they are misunderstood. They have been expelled from regular school or sent to jail and/or treatment centers. They say that adults in their lives don’t believe in them. In my art classes I want them to experience something different. I guide the art process, giving them freedom and flexibility within the curriculum to choose projects and subject matter. They are given options: choice of media, images, even paper size. The only exception is that they must work daily. They will be given an academic watch if they are not progressing. If no improvement is made by the student they are dropped from class.

**Louise:** (*aside, talks to audience*) I believe that when they have choice, they can relax; when they realize there aren’t such strict rules, they have a sense of control and empowerment.

**Narrator:** Teacher leaves the room to enlarge an image on the copy machine. The classroom aide is supervising the students. Mona returns to help a student with her landscape painting and demonstrates how to use an Xacto knife. The students are working on self-portraits, texture, and perspective assignments (see Figures 11 and 12). Several students call out.

**Narrator:** The teacher asks her student's permission to demonstrate on her drawing. She sits down and starts to draw on the paper. As she is finishing up with this student, another student calls out for help with his 2-point perspective drawing.

**K.G.:** Mrs N., please come here. This is so confusing. I don't know what I'm doing.

**Louise:** Is it okay if I show you what I mean on your drawing? I won't ruin it, I promise.

**K.G.:** I know; it’s okay. Will you do it for me?

**Louise:** No, but I’ll get you started and help you understand 2-point perspective. (*She draws a line and she continues to talk.*) It's not easy, I know, but you can do it. It takes practice. You'll get it. I have confidence in you.



Figure 11. *Imagination*, Art Student, From the Collection of Mona.

**Louise:** (*Soliloquy*) I often demonstrate directly on students' work. I ask permission first. I try to be sensitive to and respectful of their personal boundaries before I proceed. But...sometimes I can't help myself and I just dive in. Most students are very comfortable and welcome my help; some want me to do it all for them; others prefer not to have anyone touch their art and I honor that.

### **Scene 3: Individual needs**

**Mona Lisa:** As long as students are working, they can talk to each other and listen to music, either on headphones or cell phones. If the noise level gets too loud or they aren't working or thinking about their projects, music is turned down or off.

**Narrator:** Several students are working and talking about what had happened the night before. They begin working on their paper mache initials, name designs, or watercolor texture paintings. Others are working on special assignments, like abstract or realistic self-portraits or collages.

*(Examples of projects on screen on wall at back of stage. See Figures 13 and 14).*

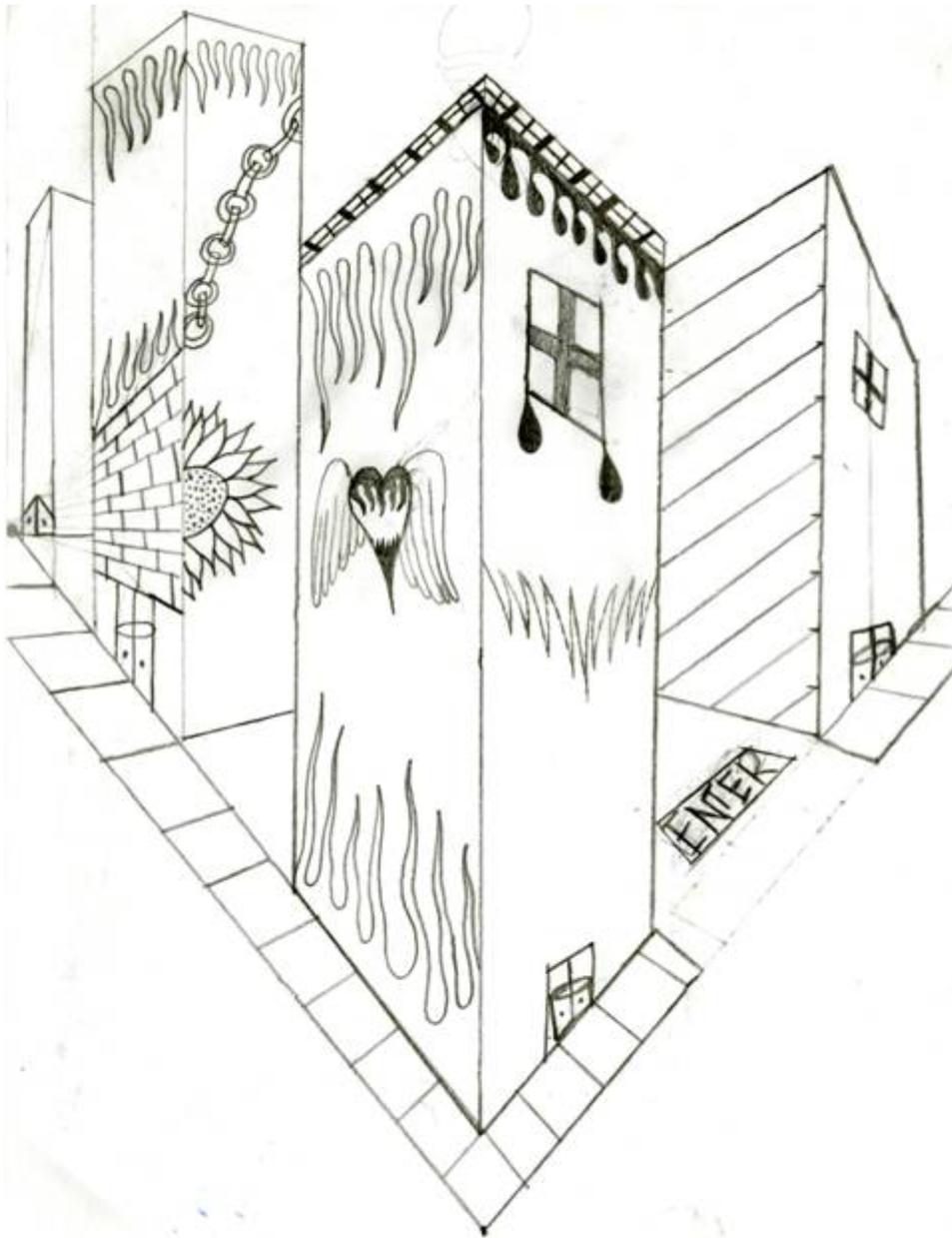


Figure 12. *Perspective Drawing*, Art Student, From the collection of Louise.



Figure: 13. *Self-Portrait*, Art Student  
From the collection of Louise



Figure 14. *Self-Portrait*, Art Student  
From the collection of Louise

**Louise to a student:** I was just sitting down to **bother** you. Where's your art journal? You haven't shown it to me lately.

**Kyle:** I always forget to bring it to class.

**Louise:** I need you to bring it to class tomorrow first hour.

**Kyle:** But, I don't come til 10:00.

**Louise:** Ask Mr. Cooper to let you come down to my class first thing in the morning.

**Kyle:** Okay, Mrs. Nevelson. I'll try to remember.

**Louise:** (*addressing another student*) Are you going to sit there all hour?

**Ben:** I'm not very artistic. I **can't** do this; will you help me?

**Louise:** Yes, I will, but remember if you think that you can, you will; if you think you can't, you're right.

**Narrator:** The next class period.

**Aimee:** Mrs. N, I can't do a self-portrait. Just thinking about doing it is making me sick. I can't even look at me. I hate myself.

**Louise:** What is it that you hate about yourself?

**Aimee:** Everything – my face, my body, my life, my relationships. I'm scared to do this assignment. I don't know what to do.

**Narrator:** Louise adjusts the assignment for this student. Aimee listens to the clear and succinct step-by-step instructions that her teacher delivers. While continuing to focus on the self-portrait, Louise asks this student to create a collage on the theme of people and relationships. She agrees and begins looking for images in magazines to represent the theme.

**Louise:** I adapt my lesson plans and curriculum to meet students' individual needs. My pedagogy is student-centered – centered on individual needs rather than curriculum-centered – with a flexible framework comprised of individual instruction, concern for emotional needs, discipline, and respect. Other times assignments are altered to meet class needs. I work individually with my students to build rapport, earn their respect, and engage them in the art-making process.

**Mona Lisa:** I had a student recently who initially hated art classes explain that even though some of the assignments seemed elementary, they made him think about his life. This was different from what he has experienced in regular high school where he felt art was waste of time. Everyone did the same project at the same time! In this setting he was able to make personal connections to his art. While adhering to district or school guidelines, I link assignments in some way to students' lives and personal interests. I encourage them to be as expressive as I can, incorporate meaningful objects, special poems or songs, nature scenes, comic heroes, and important people in their lives into their artwork.

**Robert:** All I want to do is get my art credit and get out of here and graduate.

**Latoya:** I don't. Ms. Lisa, I got my credit, but I want to stay in art.

**Mona Lisa:** It's time to move on, celebrate your accomplishment!

**Latoya:** But, I don't want to, I like it here. I'm going to miss you. Art at the other schools don't give you choice like you do.

**Mona Lisa:** I do things a little different here, you're right.

**Rosa:** Yeah, you let me be independent and pick what project I want to do and what pictures I want to use.

**Mona Lisa:** Yes, I do but within school guidelines. No violence.

**Mikayla:** You let me move at my own pace. I like that.

**Mona Lisa:** I do expect you to work independently, but you know that I will help you with your projects any way that I can.

**Narrator:** Mona looks over her shoulder at a group of students sitting at a table in the corner of the room close to the door.

**Mona Lisa:** Gentlemen, Gentlemen, positive conversation in the art room today.

### Scene 4: Violence

**Narrator:** Mona Lisa points to the bulletin board with samples of finished student artwork and explains to a student how the curriculum works. She discusses her expectations with her student. Some students challenge curricular guidelines in assignments. Despite knowing that they are not allowed to use violent images or gang or racist symbols in artwork, some students test limits and use imagery that is censored. Some explain the meaning of their art content in their self-critiques. If they can justify their use of their images, they may use certain imagery. This opens up constructive dialogue between student and teacher.

**Vince:** Just tell me what I have to do to get out of here.

**Mona Lisa:** What level are you in, Art I or Art II?

**Vince:** Art I.

**Mona Lisa:** You can select a picture to use for your assignment.

**Vince:** Okay, where are they?

**Mona Lisa:** Look over there in my file cabinet; you'll find file folders or magazines filled with all sorts of images you can use in your artwork. Or you may go to the library next door and search the Internet for a suitable image or bring a picture in from home.

**Vince:** Too many choices. Too much trouble. Just give me a picture to use.

**Mona Lisa:** Okay, I can pick one for you, but I wouldn't you rather select a picture that you like?

**Vince:** Oh, I guess so. I'll bring one tomorrow.

**Mona Lisa:** Just remember it has to be appropriate.

**Mona Lisa:** (*soliloquy*) I remember one of my students brought in an image to class that he wanted to use in his artwork. I encourage students to use imagery that is meaningful and I allow images that are expressive as long as they don't signify school violence. However, the content of this one was offensive, violent, and racist – people pointing guns at each other. I could not allow it. I talked to the student about the appropriateness of his picture. He explained that this picture was his world – what he sees in his neighborhood in the city. While I understood his explanation, we discussed alternative images he might use to communicate what he wanted to express. He thought about it for a while and settled on another picture. We were able to negotiate a solution. He was able to express himself. He felt heard.

**Louise:** (*Soliloquy*) With some of my students I never quite know what's going on in their heads. You were lucky that you were able to talk to that student without him getting upset. One day in class one of my male students became really upset. I didn't know what was *really* going on with him. He started going off on me about something. I can't even remember what it was but I do remember his anger. The students in my class tried to talk him down. I tried to stay calm. I stood in front him,

allowing some distance between him and me. I didn't want to get too close; I wanted to give him some his space and separate him from the rest of the class. I tried to help him work though whatever was going on, but it wasn't working. So after a few minutes, I simply asked him to turn around, not to say anything, and excused him from class. He complied. *Was I relieved!* I explained that when he was ready to come back to class, I was available to talk to him about what had happened and try to figure out some solutions. It's really scary, at times, to be an art teacher.

### Scene 5: Conversations

**Narrator:** Students enter the classroom engaged in conversations. They talk about politics, world events, and other social concerns while they are working on their art projects. Racial and ethnic issues surface in the art class context.

**Mona Lisa:** Each of my students is unique. I try to get to know who they are individually. I listen to students' conversations but I can't hear or respond to everything. I intervene when necessary. My students are like bumper cars...bumping energy off each other. I listen to the statements that they make in class and try to see where they are coming from – their perspective. They come from different cultures and from cultures different than my own. I try to understand what it's like to be them. Art is a way to open up communication through visual means that leads to discussion about what is going on in students' lives.

**Narrator:** A male student opens up a female student's purse and looks inside.

**Stefan:** What in the world? You got four rubbers in your purse.

**Karin:** That's personal business.

**Stefan:** It ain't personal.

**Karin:** If it ain't, then what is?

**Jereme:** What does it mean to be grown?

**Jessina:** Grown is when you got responsibilities and take care of yourself – food, bills.

**Jereme:** When you are 18, you are grown.

**Jessinia:** That's bull shit.

**Mikayla:** I need help.

**Mona Lisa:** What do you need?

**Mikayla:** Come here. I'll show you, look at this.

**Narrator:** One of Mona's students says that he is really interested in politics and "international stuff." He says that he watches Fox News channels, even on Sundays. He is particularly interested this year because he can vote and because there is a possible candidate who is African-American.

**Robert:** I hope Obama wins; he'd be the first black president.

**Mona Lisa:** Just because he looks it, does it mean he's black?

**Robert:** His father is Kenyan.

**Stefan:** What race? African?

**Robert:** Presidential, stupid.

**Robert to Ms. Lisa:** What, you don't want a black president?

**Stefan:** You just hate him.

**Mona Lisa:** How do you decide who to vote for?

**Narrator:** The sound of day care children yelling can be heard outside the classroom windows. One student comments that she sees her child playing with the other kids.

**Robert:** They are really starting to get on my nerves! (*pointing out the window to the children*) We don't need another Clinton.

**Stefan:** Whites want power over blacks.

**Robert:** I get to vote for the first time this election. Need to get rid of Bush.

**Stefan:** Why, do you think he's stupid?

**Robert:** Him and his father started all this mess.

**Vince:** If I were president, I'd legalize marijuana.

**Jessina:** What about impairment? You make bad decisions.

**Vince:** I make good decisions when I'm high. I can focus. My mind sticks me on things.

**Jessina:** I don't like the way drinking makes me feel.

**Vince:** Ah...Gray Goose and Hennessey, hypnotic.

**Jessina:** It makes me throw up.

**Jessina:** My mom's an alcoholic and I hate it. You can become one at any age.

**Narrator:** Students at one table are chanting hip hop rap songs with inappropriate lyrics as they are working on their artwork. Mona refocuses her students on their work.

**Mona Lisa:** Not good language.

**Stefan:** Are you talking to me?

**Mona Lisa:** I think so. You are singing, aren't you? And it's offensive in class and not acceptable in school.

**Stefan:** Don't be talkin' to me, because you're scared.

**Mona Lisa:** I am not scared; should I be?

**Stefan:** I'm your worst nightmare. I've got niggeritis. She's actin' like a nigger - loud and ignorant.

**Mona Lisa:** *Watch your language!*

**Stefan:** You're going to get it. You'll be the opposite of Michael Jackson.

**Mona Lisa:** I'm not sure what that means but I'm glad you are so blessed – you talk and don't work.

**Carl:** Hey teacher, I need help with my project.

**Stephan:** She's going to shoot you.

**Anna:** What are you talking about? Ms. L isn't going to hurt you.

**Mona Lisa:** You talk so loud.

**Stefan:** I'm white so treat me like it. Don't kick me out. Don't give me an "F". You play favoritism to white people.

**Mona Lisa:** I do? You earn grades in my class for participation, quizzes, and completing your artwork.

**Stefan:** Eyes on black, eyes gonna crack.

**Robert:** You racist! You Negro hater. (*Student announces to class*) She gave me a "C" because she hates black people.

**Narrator:** The student quickly apologizes and says that he was just kidding. The teacher takes him outside the classroom and privately discusses his behavior and comments. Student returns to class and sits down in his seat and announces to the class.

**Robert:** She said for me to be nice or she would call my mama.

**Mona Lisa:** (*aside*) My students make racist comments to get my attention, engage me in conflict or test limits. I try not to get into power struggles with them, but I am honest and tell the truth. There are some things that I can not accept in my classroom.

**Louise:** I confront my students right away and challenge their sexist, racist, and stereotypical comments. That's why we have so many problems in the world. People stereotype each other based on race, gender, religion, and ethnic background. They need to learn tolerance. They may not like it, but I will bother them until they get it. When I talk to them, they usually they come around. There are times when a student can't so I give them space – time to think about what they say and their attitude. They know that I am available to talk if they are ready.

**Narrator:** A male student is working on a name design that incorporates color, pattern, and texture (see Figure 15). He is using only two colors, black and red. The teacher reminds him to use more than two colors, at least three. The student remarks:

**Matt:** What, do I look Mexican and Black?

**Ms. Hazelton:** (*Aide in classroom*) That's stereotypical, ignorant, and offensive.

**Louise:** We don't tolerate statements like that in here. It doesn't matter, what race, what color, what religion. We don't use gang colors.

**Matt:** You try to control everything we do in here.

**Ms. Hazelton:** No.

**Matt:** I'm out of here.

**Louise:** Matt, when you calm down, come back in the classroom and we can talk about it.



Figure 15: *Name Design*, Art student, From the Collection of Louise.

### Scene 6: Taboos

**Narrator:** Jereme stops drawing, coughs, and comments about the strong smell of the permanent marker. The sound of an electric pencil sharpener grinding, over and over and over, is heard in the classroom. The classroom becomes quieter.

**Jereme:** I'm old enough to go into the army, I'm grown. I'm moving out when I finish high school.

**Jason:** *(to art teacher):* What would you do if you knew that the world was coming to an end?

**Mona Lisa:** You can't do anything about it.

**Jason:** Yes I can, I'd take a bottle of ibuprofen and jump out of a window.

**Jereme:** I'm not afraid to die.

**Stefan:** What if a nigger put a gun to your face?

**Jereme:** I guess I'd take it.

**Carl:** I'd use a gun. *(simulates using a semi-automatic weapon)*

**Jason:** Every time you talk, it scares me.

**Carl:** Well, I think that your drawing is scary.

**Jason:** What's so scary about it?

**Carl:** I don't know; it just is. It's dark, dude, and intimidating!

**Jason:** What about your picture? It's filled with all kinds of weapons. What's that all about?

**Rosa:** I don't want to hear about this stuff because, according to the Aztec culture, the world will come to an end in 2012. It's depressing me. I don't know why you want to talk about it so much.

**Narrator:** Students witness, question, and challenge each others' imagery and symbols. Artwork they create is not always pretty; it can be dark, ugly, and scary (see Figure 16). Teachers discuss the meaning of students' artwork, either one to one or in their self-critiques. When necessary, they are redirected. A student reviews her progress on her artwork with Mona. Her picture juxtaposes provocative symbols – a syringe, pills, upside-down crosses, open books, and the anatomical heart with a corn stalk, three ears of corn and a brick wall.



Figure 16. *Charcoal Drawing*, Art Student, From the Collection of Mona Lisa.

**Mona:** I was really curious about this image. I knew that the images and symbols were meaningful to this student; however, if administrators saw the picture – well, they would be shocked and want me to censor its expression. I view art that is offensive and shocks me sometimes in an art museum or at an exhibit but should it be suppressed because I don't like it or don't understand it? How do you respond as an art teacher when you see similar work created by students? It's a dilemma. I asked this student what she was trying to say and I discovered that she was communicating metaphorically, not literally. I think that this happens a lot with students. She explained to me that her picture represented the challenges, the influences, and the temptations that she confronts in her life every day – drugs, sexuality, spirituality, and school. I don't think that most art teachers would allow students to create this type of work because it contained drug-related images like a syringe and pills, but I was interested to know more about all the symbolism.

**Narrator:** As an art teacher do you manage it by saying she can't do it or re-channel her ideas to express it differently with more acceptable images? *Or* do you talk to students about their symbols and images?

**Mona:** (*aside*) I talk to my students about their work and have them write descriptions in their art critiques. That way I can truly understand my students through their art and if I see or hear something that really concerns me, I will get them help.

**Louise:** It is totally unacceptable to allow students in art class to draw anything drug-related. The philosophy and the policy of the center require that I say no. I want them to learn ways to define themselves other than through drug paraphernalia anyway. I'm not an art therapist but sometimes I give my students assignments that are more therapeutic in nature. I talk to my students about the meaning of their artwork. Counselors also talk to the students about the art assignments.

### **Scene 7: Life issues**

**Narrator:** Students look to their art teachers for technical suggestions with their art work, individual instructional time, and special attention. Keeping students at different art levels focused on multiple projects and assignments is a challenge. But what is *more* challenging are the serious issues that their students are confronting in their daily lives. Mona's and Louise's students are worried about real and potential violence as well as the multiple cultural issues that impact their lives personally, collectively, and culturally. A student walks into the art room and approaches the teacher's desk, picking up a utility knife from the pencil holder.

**JaNelle:** Mrs. L, you hear what happened at Adams High School? I'm worried about other people's safety. You need to lock this thing up. Someone might hurt someone.

**Mona Lisa:** No, I don't know what happened.

**JaNelle:** There was a stabbing at Adams. They need metal detectors in all the schools in the city. I don't feel safe in school.

**Mona Lisa:** The district may resort to that but here we have an open campus. Students are given responsibility and the freedom to come and go.

**JaNelle:** I know, but I still think that we need more security. It's hard to focus on my work.

**Narrator:** Mona puts the tool in her drawer. JaNelle sits down at her table and begins working on her final Art I project to receive her class credit before she graduates. She pulls out her art folder that is covered with handwritten words – *racism, abuse, suicide, addiction, violence, rape, teen sex, crime, cocaine babies, cancer, and childbirth*. She removes a picture of Martin Luther King from her folder that she intends to incorporate in her artwork (see Figure 17). The music volume gets softer.

**Narrator:** On a different part of the stage, Louise is at her desk checking something at her computer and is involved in discussions with several of her students. A student calls out.

**Louise:** Give me a minute. Keep trying. I know you can do it. (*Turns attention to another student*) What's wrong?

**Jake:** I don't know.

**Liam:** Me, either

**Matt:** Well I know, it's parents. They *are* the problem.

**Louise:** Is it all them or some you?

**Jake:** I don't know, Mrs. L. I don't know what I feel most of the time.

**Matt:** I know, I feel hate. It's all of them. I hate my family. They are all so ignorant. They think I'm worthless and that I will never make anything of my life. I'm sick of hearing that. I don't want to talk to them.

**Narrator:** Mona Lisa is sitting at a table with several students. Two female students, one Latino in ART III and another African-American in ART I, are involved in conversation about their respective art assignments. Another female student sitting at the other end of the table starts talking directly to the art teacher. The teacher turns her attention to this student.



Figure 17. *Shape/Form*, Art student, From the Collection of Mona Lisa.

**Karin:** Ms. Lisa, you don't have any kids, do you?

**Mona Lisa:** No, I don't.

**Karin:** Will you adopt my baby?

**Alexandrea:** She may as well adopt it. She'd take good care of it.

**Karin:** I'll give it to you for free. I'm not dealing with two kids. I don't want it.

**Mona:** *(aside)* That was a difficult moment when Karin asked me to adopt her baby. I didn't know what to say. I draw boundaries between school and the personal. I have to. She sees me like a counselor but I'm not. I do listen, though, and tell my students what is real to me. My own experience of pain, loss, and trauma does help me to empathize with them.

**Louise:** I wish I could take all my students home with me but I can't. For me, letting go of my students is one of my most difficult challenges. Through their art and

conversations, I get to know them at a deep level. I think it's what makes me a good teacher. I care about students and encourage them to be successful. I am very honest with my students. I let them know what they are doing well and areas that need improvement in their artwork. I encourage my students and let them know that they are capable. They don't hear that from adults in their lives. I get attached to them. I know that I can't fix everything in their lives; they need to move on, and I need to let go. I wonder without the kind of candy-coated support they get here whether they will make it.

**Narrator:** The sound of music is heard from a student's cell phone; smells of permanent marker fill the air as students are drawing black borders around their paper to frame their artwork. One student holds up his drawing while, another student calls out for the teacher's assistance.

**Stefan:** That's baby-making music. *(Turns to look at teenage girl in the class.)* No more babies for you.

**LaToya:** I need help.

**Mona Lisa:** I'll be there in just a few minutes. Hold on.

**Eric:** I'm finished, look.

**Mona Lisa:** I see, but I think that this area needs work. Keep working on it. You aren't finished yet.

**Eric:** But, it is finished. I'm tired; I don't want to work anymore. We only have five minutes. Class is over.

**Mona Lisa:** No, it's not. Remember your participation points. Reports come out at the end of the week. Keep working – you can get a lot done in the time that we have left.

**Narrator:** The room is quiet. Only the humming of lights, the computer, and the air conditioner are audible. Anna continues working on her landscape painting for a contest. Mona and Karin are drawing and continue their earlier conversation.

**Karin:** Ms. Lisa, I'm going into basic training. It pays well, but I can't afford to pay for two kids. This boy isn't gonna pay. It's a white boy this time.

**Alexandrea:** It was last time, wasn't it?

**Karin:** No, it was a mixed guy last time. Ms. Lisa, see if you had him in art class.

**Mona Lisa:** We've got three minutes. Time to clean up. Clean up. Put your finished work to be graded on my desk, work in progress in your folders or portfolio. Everybody clean up. Line up at the door and stay inside the class until it's time to go.

**Narrator:** The sounds of pencils tapping and rulers slapping; paper shuffling into folders/portfolios and drawers closing; of footsteps across a squeaky wood floor and chairs being shoved into tables can be heard as students get ready to leave the classroom.

### **Scene 8: Distance**

**Narrator:** A week later. As art class begins the guidance counselor comes into the class to check the number of students in each art class, to discuss the art waiting list, and to add new students to the teacher's class rolls. As she leaves, a teacher calls on the phone checking if a student for whom she has written a pass, was in art class. Students are humming, singing, and talking while waiting for class to begin. The principal enters the classroom looking for a student.

**Mrs. Webb-Jackson:** Mrs. Lisa, have you seen Rhonda?

**Mona Lisa:** No, I haven't seen her come in yet.

**Jasmin:** I saw her in the hall.

**Mona Lisa:** She's usually here by now. I don't know where she is.

**Narrator:** Rhonda, who has been hiding unnoticed under the desk by the computer, crawls on the floor, stands up, and walks out of the classroom with the principal.

**Rhonda:** I'm in trouble again, but I'll be back.

**Mona Lisa:** I'll be here. Who's missing today? We have a small class.

**Martina:** Jackson left campus yesterday. Nobody knows where he is.

**Eric:** He'll be back. He's done this before.

**Mona Lisa:** What about Tamara?

**Jasmin:** Haven't seen her but I heard the twins are sick.

**Louise:** There are lots of stereotypes about students who are labeled "at-risk." They can be demanding of teachers' time and attention. In regular schools teachers don't have or take the time, don't understand them and I think that they are afraid to work with them. I feel more comfortable working with at-risk kids here more than kids in regular schools. I get to have such a close relationship with them compared to a regular classroom that can be superficial. Small classes allow me to spend time with them individually. In an alternative setting, they can be who they are and, through our discussions and their art creations, I get to know who they are. It's hard to deal with all this sad stuff. I don't know what to do with it all. Sometimes, at lunch or after school when I'm not with students, my sarcasm leaks out. I think this is the way that I deal with all the terrible stories that I hear. I get sarcastic. I also make art out outside of here. That helps me deal with it too.

**Mona Lisa:** I find that my own spiritual practice helps me deal with all the pain and suffering that my students bring into the classroom. My biggest challenge is making sure that I'm not moody and that I give my students the proper response. I'm always checking in with myself emotionally. My students are dealing with lots of hardships and struggles, more than the average traditional high school teenager may have. Their struggles would be huge for adults, much less a teenager.

**Scene 9: Returning to class**

**Mona Lisa:** All right class, let's get to work. Sign in. You want to get credit for being here today. Who needs to take a quiz? Who needs their next packet? Who is ready to do their self-critique?

**Narrator:** Several students call out in unison, letting their teacher know what they need. Mona Lisa hands out papers. She demonstrates a painting process for several students. With her back turned, she listens to class discussions. She continues painting and prompts students to get focused on whatever project they need to work on. The smell of paint and turpentine fills the room. Students are going in and out of the classroom for various reasons. Some are taking passes, which hang on the wall by the door, to the office or the library, while others get water from the water fountain outside the classroom for their painting projects.

**Karin:** (*holding a small cup of water*) Ms. L. Did you hear what happened to me?

**Mona Lisa:** No, I haven't. What happened? I wondered where you were last week.

**Karin:** I had to go the emergency room. I didn't know what was happening to me. I lost 14 pounds in the past two weeks; I was stressed out, not eating or drinking. I had a miscarriage. I had to have this procedure where they cleaned everything out.

**Mona Lisa:** Oh, Karin, I'm concerned about you.

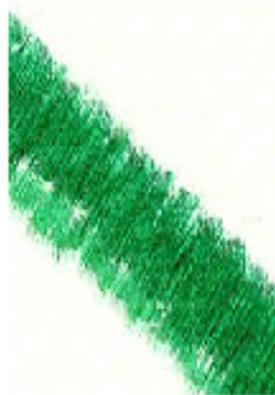
**Karin:** Me, too!

**Narrator:** Karin returns to the end of the table, sits alone, and continues working quietly on her art assignment (see Figure 18). Mona Lisa writes notes in her grade book.

*(Lights fade to black).*



Figure 18. *Solitude*, Art Student, From the Collection of Mona Lisa.



chapter five  
EPILOGUE

## CHAPTER 5

### EPILOGUE

The play *T...O...R...N...*, presented in the previous chapter, characterized art education in alternative high schools from observations of art students and the perspectives of their art teachers. In the dramatic narrative form the dialogue, which was taken directly from field note observations, portrayed the teaching and learning that occurs in the art classroom and showed different ways that students and their teachers describe and experience art education. The multiple roles of art teachers as artist, as bricoleur (Dalton, 2001), as mediator, as witness, and sometimes as therapist were highlighted. The story continues in Chapter 5 with an epilogue.

Epilogues are used as short literary devices to explain what happens to characters and bring closure to a theatrical or literary performance like Puck's speech at the end of Shakespeare's *A Mid Summers Night's Dream* (Shakespeare.com, n.d.). As epilogue, this chapter illuminates the art teacher respondents' reflections on art making as a part of the research process; summarizes their philosophies about art, pedagogy, and curricula with students at-risk in alternative high schools; and offers insights into the goals, challenges, and roles of art educators in these non traditional educational settings, as established in the original research questions.

hooks (1994) has posited that “coming to voice is not just the act of telling one’s experience. It is using that telling strategically – to come to voice that you can speak freely about other subjects” (p. 148). The continuation of this dramatic format established in Chapter 4 illuminates participants’ experiences, gives them voice, and allows them to speak openly about their pedagogy and practice as art teachers with adolescent students at-risk in alternative high schools. This approach is in keeping with phenomenological qualitative research that emphasizes the subjective experience of participants by describing and identifying their everyday experiences from their perspective.

**Narrator:** The clinking of beads, charms, and found objects against metal tins can be heard. Like a kid in a candy store, the art teachers express their excitement as they begin to run their fingers through the miscellaneous objects. As each teacher selects objects to create a bead collage that reflects their experience as art educators with students at-risk in alternative high schools, they begin to discuss their philosophies about art and teaching.

**Louise:** Oh wow, exciting! It looks fun. I’ve never created a bead collage. We can do this while we talk?

**Mona:** This *is* really fun. Teachers don’t get the opportunity to do this very often – make art and talk about their teaching practice.

**Louise:** I don’t take time to formally reflect on what I do or think about myself and how I teach art. Before talking to you, [the researcher], I just did my thing, you know, my teaching. Now I am noticing what I do; before I just did it without much thought.

**Mona:** (*Soliloquy*) Art can bring open communication out in a visual form. Not *just* in visual form, but in verbal as well. But when bureaucratic and hierarchical structures of schools restrict [and censor] art work and imagery students can use in their work, open communication is affected. Kids need to be able to look at images and art work in their environment, relate to it, and reflect upon it. It’s amazing what my students come up with – things that I would never think about. I am lucky to have as much communication with my students as I do. But you know, it depends on the personality of the teacher. Some teachers are quick to write a referral or send a student out of class. I’d rather discuss a student’s negative language or behavior than just sending them out of class. I create an environment in the art classroom where students feel that they can express themselves, within reason, both verbally and visually. They are surprised that I

allow such freedom of expression because they say, “when I was at the other high school, we weren’t allowed to do any of this.”

A curriculum that is open to everyone gives students the freedom to express and freedom to relate art to their own lives. I believe that when curriculum is connected to students’ lives, they are self-motivated. You can teach formal elements and principles of art and include meaningful pictures that connect to your students.

I think that as an art educator, I can’t separate my teaching from who I am as a person. Look these beads; everything is intertwined, affects another, and is interwoven. My teaching is just like this (holds up beads) – the intertwining of culture, community, and school (see Figure 19). My students are unique and come from different cultures like these beads, yet, it all works together. The outcome of art education is that students develop self-identity as they learn to move through their communities and the world. Through the visual arts they discover that they can be individuals. That’s the heart of the mission for me as an art educator.

**Louise:** What I teach my students is that art is a part of everyday life. My students are so egocentric. I try to get them to be less self-centered and connect to the visual art world around them. They don’t know how to see, I mean really look at things in their environment. They have lost their sense of color and a sense of wonder that young kids have. These beads are so colorful (see Figure 20). I try to recapture that sense of awe by looking at nature and color. I try to show them the colorfulness of art education. Not that my curriculum is all color but I think that color is really strong. Once they understand the power and emotion of color, they are more sensitive to their feelings and others’.

I believe that education in art is to get students to express their feelings – their identity. I want my students to believe in themselves because if you get anybody to believe in themselves, then it will do wonders. They need a lot of support and encouragement. Finishing an art project boosts their self-esteem levels.

**Narrator:** Louise quietly arranges beads and continues to look for just the right beads.

**Louise:** What are these little funky ones? Oh, that’s a nice one. I’m trying to find something to represent the emotional. I realize that I am doing a kind of therapeutic art with my students and want to signify that somehow. It’s not art therapy, but it kind of looks like it because I have students connect with their emotions through their art. Artists express emotions. I love to teach and inspire my students to put some passion and emotion in their art – something of themselves. I want them think creatively – outside the box – and try something that they haven’t done before in art, like working with a new technique, a different process, or an unusual material.



Figure 19. *Bead Collage*, Mona Lisa.



Figure 20. *Bead Collage*, Louise Nevelson.

**Louise:** (*Soliloquy*) I'm going to try to tell you what all this means to me. I'll start here. This artsy one represents my beliefs about art. Some beads are handmade and remind me that as a teacher I am molding the students with my hands and my beliefs about art, about education, and about life. I wanted to make sure that this large black onyx was at the end because it looks like a puzzle piece. You are molding your students, with their puzzle pieces, into who they are and giving them what you have to teach them so they can make it in the world. Umm, these are my dumbbells (*points to tubular silver beads*) to represent being strong. In my teaching, I'm kind of like a personal coach assisting kids in becoming strong and believing in themselves. I want my students to be positive, look on the bright side of things, and stay playful like some of the objects I have included in my bead collage. And this light green bead, which has many facets, represents the quality of being easygoing as an art teacher. You have to be that way and not so structured or harsh. You can't take things your students do personally; you have to lighten up a little bit. This section of wooden beads (*points to a section of the strand of beads*) is so primitive, and yet delicate, like my students. The heart, even though it's big, is for delicacy too, and for love. These kids need a lot of love, encouragement, and support to succeed. These beads are totally unique, again like my students, and represent that in teaching everything is forever changing, different each day with each student depending on what is happening in their lives. As a teacher you have to be flexible to change at any moment. Education is a very intricate process.

**Mona:** I've never used my art to organize my thoughts about teaching. It's kind of like art therapy, isn't it? I think that reaching kids at a different emotional level, especially for contemporary students of today, is so important. They are dealing with a lot of issues and environments that we don't touch on [in the education process]... There has to be more. I would really like to get into art therapy to know more about it.

**Louise:** I think that a focus on the emotional side of things in art education for teachers is needed. I came out of the college with technical art knowledge but what was lacking was how these students were going to present to you – you know, how they are going to come into your class. They come with emotional backpacks. They don't teach you in teacher education about the emotional side of teaching.

**Mona:** In my university classes we touched briefly on the emotional needs of students, those students with emotional disturbances and at-risk. I don't believe that the university offers adequate education to teachers to prepare them to work with students at-risk. I would like to see pre-service art teachers do their student teaching in places like Kozol. Then they would be able to manage just about anything. What they would learn here about the social and emotional sides of the art classroom they could then use in the traditional educational setting.

**Louise:** Art teachers need “special” education more than regular classroom teachers because often students who are having difficulties academically, behaviorally or

socially end up in the art classroom. Art teachers need a couple of classes that teach them what to expect from these students, how to handle students at-risk, and how to deal with their special needs. Maybe call it, “Art Therapy for Educators.” The class could give art teachers more knowledge about how to work with troubled kids, the ways in which art is used as therapy, and how art teachers can apply the approach in the classroom.

***T.O.R.N. 1***

ripped, a (part),  
 torn to pieces,  
 not whole  
 torn,  
 not complete,  
 torn  
 in parts,  
 torn between two things  
 - lisa kay (4/14/2008)

***T.O.R.N. 2***

troubled,  
 in trouble,  
 traumatized,  
 the ‘other’,  
 the outsider,  
 relationships,  
 normal?  
 - lisa kay (4/15/2008)

Writing these two poems allowed me to make sense of the data in a non-discursive manner. Using word play around the word *torn*, I discovered a metaphor that would assist in my understanding of the essential questions in this study: How do students and teachers in alternative high schools settings characterize art education? What teaching and learning occur in art education classrooms with adolescent students

at-risk in the alternative high schools? What is the art teacher's role in this type of setting? What are the goals of the art teacher? And what are the goals of the students?

Before I started my dissertation research, I made preliminary site visits. On the way to one potential research site, I stopped at the car dealership to have warranty work done on my car. I sat down to read the newspaper while I waited for my car to be serviced. As I opened the paper, I noticed that part of it was in shreds. No big deal. When I went to the ladies' room to wash the newsprint of my hands, the paper towels tore as they came out of the dispenser. Again, no big deal, just an annoyance. I proceeded to my first site to take a tour, meet the art teacher, and observe in the art classroom. I sat through several classes and met students in this residential treatment school: some who were unhappy, hurt, angry, tired; others receptive, warm, and creative. I left this site hopeful I'd get to come back and spend more time. I had lunch at Mary's Market Restaurant. I ordered, picked up my muffin and tea, and reached for a napkin that shredded as I took it from the holder. I kept encountering shredded and torn paper all day. I saved some of the bits and pieces of paper and created a visual memo representing my experience (see Figure 21). This is an excerpt from my field note written on the back of my torn paper collage.

I visited two possible research sites today. In the a.m. I dropped off my car for service and while in the bathroom I struggled with both the toilet paper and paper towel dispensers, shredding and tearing paper. Throughout the day "torn" paper surfaced as a metaphor for my research and the students in these sites. Am I torn between something?



Figure 21. *TORN*, Field note/Visual Memo, 2/9/07.

Are these youth torn? One class was creating torn paper self-portraits. I made an art collage from the bits and pieces of paper I collected during the day to represent my experience. I told this story to Suesi. We both thought the word “torn” was a fitting signifier for the *Troubled* and *Traumatized* students I was observing and experiencing, their ‘*Other*’ status and my *Outsider* status, the *Relationships* between the art teacher and students, students and their art work, and the idea of what was *Normal*. **TORN**. Hum...I wonder.

(Personal reflection, 2/09/07)

I filed this card away physically with my other visual memos/field notes and mentally in my brain until the word surfaced again during a session at the writing center when the director, reminded me I had told her the “torn” story. As an acronym,

**T.O.R.N.** seems a fitting title for my one-act play that describes my research findings and is an organizing metaphor for the discussion section of this chapter.

## Teaching Challenges

### Alternative Schools: a State of Flux

Art teachers in alternative high schools balance and maneuver within systems in a constant state of flux. Each teacher is flexible and adapts her teaching to a changing environment that is different each day. For instance, both teachers' class rosters changes regularly. New students come and go frequently. They are able to teach art in a setting with the ambiguity of not knowing exactly what or who they will be teaching each day.

Louise describes her school as having the illusion of order and professionalism. Mona would agree. Communication can be poor between administration and staff regarding important issues affecting the art education programs. For example, Louise was embarrassed and frustrated when initial research proposal documents were lost somewhere in the administrative center and had to be resubmitted, and after I was given permission and clearance to begin my observations, she had to ask me not to come back until further notice. I was asked to meet with Louise and her administrative vice president. In that meeting I was informed that the problem was twofold. First, the center had not followed proper procedures for allowing someone to come in and conduct research. Second, I was told by this administrator that I was not *really* doing research because it did not resemble research that was familiar. She explained that

they did quantitative research with the students. This was different from my qualitative research with teachers. They didn't know what to do with me. After some clarification, agreeing to provide the institution with a one-page report with my recommendations for the art education program, and filling out paperwork as if I were an intern or employee, I was given permission to return. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) caution, gaining access is the most difficult part of doing qualitative naturalistic inquiry, and gatekeepers like this vice president, have the authority to grant, and in my case retract, access to sites (p. 258). Gaining access proved challenging but worth the frustration and time delays.

Figure 22 is a visual memo that documents my experience of being an outsider, trying to get in, caught in an internal web of chaos and confusion in my research site. I'm in there somewhere. Gaining entry is tricky.

### Understanding Art Education

Both art teachers believe that there is a lack of awareness on the part of the administration about art education. Mona, applying principles of alternative education while adhering to state/district art guidelines, finds this challenging. For example, a student must receive 90 hours of instruction to earn an art credit. Since the art curriculum is self-paced, some students, if motivated, can finish in six to eight weeks. However, they must stay in class and do extra assignments to fill time. She explains she must balance district and school policies and guidelines with the facilitation of artistic expression. "You are told what you can and cannot do with your students."

Louise is torn between her responsibilities to her students and the administration. She is sometimes forced to cancel her art education classes to meet her administrative duties as department head. According to the art teachers in this study, their administrators don't understand the goals of art education or the commitment teachers have to their students (see Figure 23).



Figure 22. *Caught in a web*, Field Note/Visual Memo, 11/3/07



Figure 23. *Collaborative Student Project*, From the Collection of Louise.

### School Supplies, Art Materials, and Technology Needs

There is a lack of understanding regarding art teachers' budgetary needs. These art teachers do not have sufficient money in their yearly art budgets. Supply orders are not processed in a timely manner. Office supplies are not always available, like toner and paper for the copy machine. Assignments must be adjusted based on availability

of supplies. Mid semester, Mona revamped her instructional delivery system due to lack of access to supplies for the copier. Using her own money, she developed spiral-bound textbooks for her students to replace the art curriculum packets she had been using. Up-to-date computer equipment and software is not a priority for the administrators. Mona explains that her administration does not believe that art teachers need current computer equipment to teach art. Other academic disciplines receive new computers, but she had to purchase her own. While Louise recently was given a new computer, her administration didn't feel that she needed special software. On her old computer, she used Photoshop routinely to scan her students' completed art work and send copies electronically to the assigning art teachers in her students' home districts. Her students also use Photoshop to complete computer graphics assignments to keep up with their regular art classes while at Birch. On one occasion, Louise facilitated a collaborative art project with several of her students using Photoshop. So without this software, her practice and curriculum is limited and she is unable to liaison with the students' other teachers, which is an important role that she plays in their art education. Despite these challenges, the two art teachers are resourceful and make necessary adjustments to meet their curricular goals. Despite limited funds, they are creative in their use of materials.

#### Multi-level/Multi-Age Classes

The vast differences in the makeup of the emotional and education levels are real challenges in alternative high school art classrooms Students are at different grade

levels, different places in the curriculum, and are functioning at different developmental levels – in maturity and in art knowledge and skills. In one class period, students are doing different projects, assignments or lessons, which make planning and class preparations difficult. These teachers may demonstrate multiple techniques during any given class period. They must be flexible to teach in this way.

### Continuing Education

Administrators may not understand that to stay current in the field, art educators need time for professional development and specialized teacher training. In-service training is provided on general education and behavior management. Minimal time off is allowed; therefore, teachers have little professional time, other than school breaks, to attend art education conferences or workshops. Louise works 12 months a year, so she has even less time than traditional educators to pursue her professional growth.

### Isolation

“Art teachers have commonly felt isolated in regular schools and have had difficulty finding supportive groups of colleagues...this is the case because art teachers...are literally isolated, often being the only members of the profession in a school and geographically located far from the center of leadership (Freedman, 2007, p. 212). Like regular art teachers, art teachers who teach in alternative high schools feel a sense of isolation, but it may be exaggerated and have an even greater impact

due to the multiple types of students they teach. Louise is employed by Birch and is the only teacher in the center who is not an employee of the local school district. While she works closely with special education teachers, she is disconnected from other art educators. Mona feels disconnected from the art teachers who teach as regular high school art teachers in her district. Until this year she was not invited to attend art teacher meetings or submit students' work for the All District Art Show. Art work produced by adolescent students at-risk at the alternative high school was not considered to be of the same caliber or as competitive as students' in regular art classes. Mona persevered, advocated for her students, and submitted their art work. As a result, a large number of her students' work was exhibited this year (2008). In fact, one student's work was featured on promotional postcards and posters advertising the show. The students and their parents, faculty, and administration of Kozol were pleased to be included in this district event.

#### To Display or Not to Display?

Both art teachers are cautious about the art work they display outside of the art classroom but do display student work to motivate students, build positive self-worth, and promote art education in their schools. Louise must be certain that her students' confidentiality is protected. This is not a concern for Mona, who puts students' full names beside their art on display. "A blank bulletin board wouldn't look good in the politics of the school." Mona explains that, like Louise, she must carefully decide what is acceptable to put on display. "I can't put up anything that is the least bit

controversial.” Mona remarks. For example, a piece of art work with a star (of David — which has also been used as a gang symbol) was ripped down by the assistant principal, and the art teacher was accused of promoting gangs in the school (see Figure 24). This was not Mona’s intention. “Once I learn the gang symbols and colors they change.” Mona explains that she finds it difficult to stay current. She would like administrators to funnel current information to her and provide professional development for teachers regarding the changing gang symbols and colors. Louise handles the gang issue by not allowing students to use only two colors in an art creation. She instructs her students to add a third color in compositions (Black and Blue + Red, as in Figure 15).

Although it is frustrating for Mona, Louise, and their students to have their art work censored, Henley (1997), an art educator/art therapist, notes that avoiding controversy could be considered a responsible practice and contends that there is the difference between an artist’s right to create art work and an artist’s privilege to display that art work. Moreover, he writes that “in school settings, the audience is captive, unable to freely decide if they can handle such a seductive and confusing work of art” (p. 41). When displaying student art work, art educators need to consider the audience, community values, and school culture.

### Handling Difficult Issues in the Art Classroom

Administrators seem to be oblivious to the fact that art teachers must deal with difficult issues that surface in the art classroom. Art teachers are dealing with social,



Figure 24. *Shape/Form*, Art Student, From the Collection of Mona.

emotional, and cultural issues in the class, including community and school violence. As Mona mentioned, “it’s not always about art.” These teachers often lack administrative support to handle safety issues with violent students. They are expected to deal with difficult students on their own. Little backup exists. Mona described a school shooting that occurred at the end of a week mid-point in the semester. No precautions were in place and communication between the administration and teachers was poor about many issues, including this one. Teachers did not know anything about the shooting until the following Monday, when they arrived at school to see an increase in police presence and security measures. I overheard a student providing Mona with a detailed account of what had occurred. As an outsider, this incident forced me to confront my own feelings and fears

about school violence and my personal safety as a researcher at Kozol. While I was always aware of the potential for violence in my research sites, after this incident I was more vigilant about my surroundings. Students bring the world(s) they know and experience into their art and the art classroom, yet they are not always encouraged to explore personal and social ideas in visual form or to critically interrogate the diversity of images they confront in their daily lives. “If education is working, students can make art that comments on social justice, community change, and concern for the environment” (Freedman, 2005, p. 148).

“Art is something pretty and nice to look at.”

Art in expressive form is often censored by the district according to Mona. Mona embraces the philosophy outlined by the National Art Education Association (NAEA) that states, “the freedom to create and experience works of art is essential to our democracy” (NAEA, 1991, para.1). It is the role of art educators to stress the importance of self-expression and encourage students to reject or accept art work but not suppress its expression (NAEA, 1991). It seems as if formal principles of art that include line, shape, shading, texture, and value are acceptable, but imagery with intense emotional content is not. Mona laments, “If I can’t facilitate expressive art work with my students, then where do I belong as an art teacher?” Historically, art education has emphasized therapeutic self-expression as a part of students’ artistic production. However, “in contemporary contexts, creative production may need to be

thought of less as therapeutic self expression and more as the development of cultural and personal identity” (Freedman, 2007, p. 211).

Contemporary art education with its emphasis on visual culture is an alternative to Mona’s and Louise’s curriculum that emphasizes formal elements of art and design. Contemporary art educators are being educated in social and critical approaches that “recognize [the] need to connect material covered in class with the experiences and interests of students” (Darts, 2006, p. 7). While emphasizing socio-critical and cultural practice, this approach to art curricula provides opportunities for students to create art in a social context; engages the students in a practice that focuses on the exploration of personal and social ideas and/or identities in visual form; and encourages students to navigate, critically interrogate, and create visual imagery (Darts, 2004, 2006; Freedman, 2003, 2005; Gaudelius, 2005 Smith-Shank, 2005). As Freedman (2003) notes, “the primary purpose of such student art is not therapeutic; it is social and cultural. It is not just about individual emotions; it is about personalization of social issues” (p. 148).

In both art classrooms in this study, students may use the Internet or magazines to search for images and icons to use in their art. However, in Mona’s school, her students are blocked from using the *Artcyclopedia*, a fine art search engine on the Internet, and can not use or study fine art images that contain nudity or violent content. While teachers do have art books in the classrooms for student use and they are allowed to take students to art museums where they cannot censor the types of images students see, the administration limits access to art masterpieces due to potentially

inappropriate images and provocative content. In our technological society, Mona notes this is a frustration for art teachers. Both art teachers must steer students away from and censor provocative and violent images and/or content associated with gangs, alcohol, and drugs even though these visual images are a part of students' visual culture. This practice limits opportunities for students to interpret and comment on what goes on around them in and out of the classroom. Additionally, it restricts teachers' understanding of students' cultures. Mona and Louise's frustrations with this issue beg the question of whether it may be better to allow students to express themselves visually, to question images produced in and out of class, and discuss their meaning rather than not allow expression of challenging images at all.

### Troubled Students

Two male students had a conversation in Mona's classroom about their art work, each describing the other's imagery as scary, dark, and intimidating. One student produced a particularly provocative piece of art work that met her curriculum requirements and scored high on the assessment rubric, especially in rendering. This posed a dilemma for Mona. From a glance it resembled a knight's horse covered with face armor, but closer examination revealed something different. This piece of art work was packed with all kinds of weapons –brass knuckles, firearms, handguns, knives, and grenades. Mona requires students to write self-critiques and Carl wrote his; however, this piece needed further explanation. So she asked for clarification. He mentioned the violence in our culture and stated these were some of the “things” that he sees in his

environment and in his world. While she understood his intent, they discussed the fact that his imagery was not appropriate for school and would not be displayed outside the classroom on the bulletin boards. The student accepted her decision. (It was, however, put on the art program website.) Carl had used pencil to complete this drawing. Mona's digital reproduction was light and slightly blurry, making it difficult to discern the image clearly.

Several months after I finished collecting my data, I went back to visit Mona and her students. Mona wanted me to see the mural that her students were painting on a wall leading to the school's cafeteria and to give me some student art work. Additionally, I wanted to speak with Mona about her students' reaction to the recent shooting at the university I attend, and find out what effect the increasing reports of violence in a nearby large metropolitan school district were having on her students. As we talked, together we flipped through three portfolios of student art work that she wanted to give me to use as student examples. Mona explained to me that more student work, like Carl's, was available for me to use from her website. Mona updated me on Carl. He was suspended earlier in the week and hospitalized to undergo a psychiatric evaluation. He and Jason, who used to sit next to each other in seventh hour, got into a fight. Carl was moved to third hour art class to separate the two. It seems that in this new class, students began to report to Mona that Carl was talking about blowing up the school. While Mona did not hear this firsthand, she started listening more closely to his conversations. Carl described in graphic detail "something about Japanese violence toward dolphins," which was disturbing to Carl

and the others, including Mona. One student directly asked Carl, in front of Mona, if he had threatened to blow up the school and Carl admitted that it was true. Mona documented this conversation for her administrator. A meeting was held with Carl, his mother, and the principal. In that meeting Carl's mother reported that her son does talk about bombs and has knowledge of bomb making. He spends a lot of time on the internet. Carl confirmed this. Mona has not heard any information about results of his psych evaluation and said that she may not. As we talked, Mona noted Carl's earlier drawing of weapons and one of a flower and wondered how the pieces of his puzzle were being put together (see Figure 25).

A horse with weapons and a flower – what do these two pieces of art work reveal about her student? Mona feels that it is challenging for art teachers to assess student art work and make decisions about emotional disturbance, problematic behavior, or potential to commit violence. This is not part of her educational background, job, or role; however, Mona explained that she wouldn't have done anything different than she did with this student. She created an environment safe enough for her students to come to her with difficult issues, encouraged self-reflection through self-critique, talked to them about their art work, and listened to her students' conversations. This is how Mona deals with violent or controversial images her students see in their worlds, discuss in the classroom, or produce in their art work.

She acknowledges that policies are set by districts, school administrators and even other art teachers that restrict art content dealing with sex or nudity, violence,

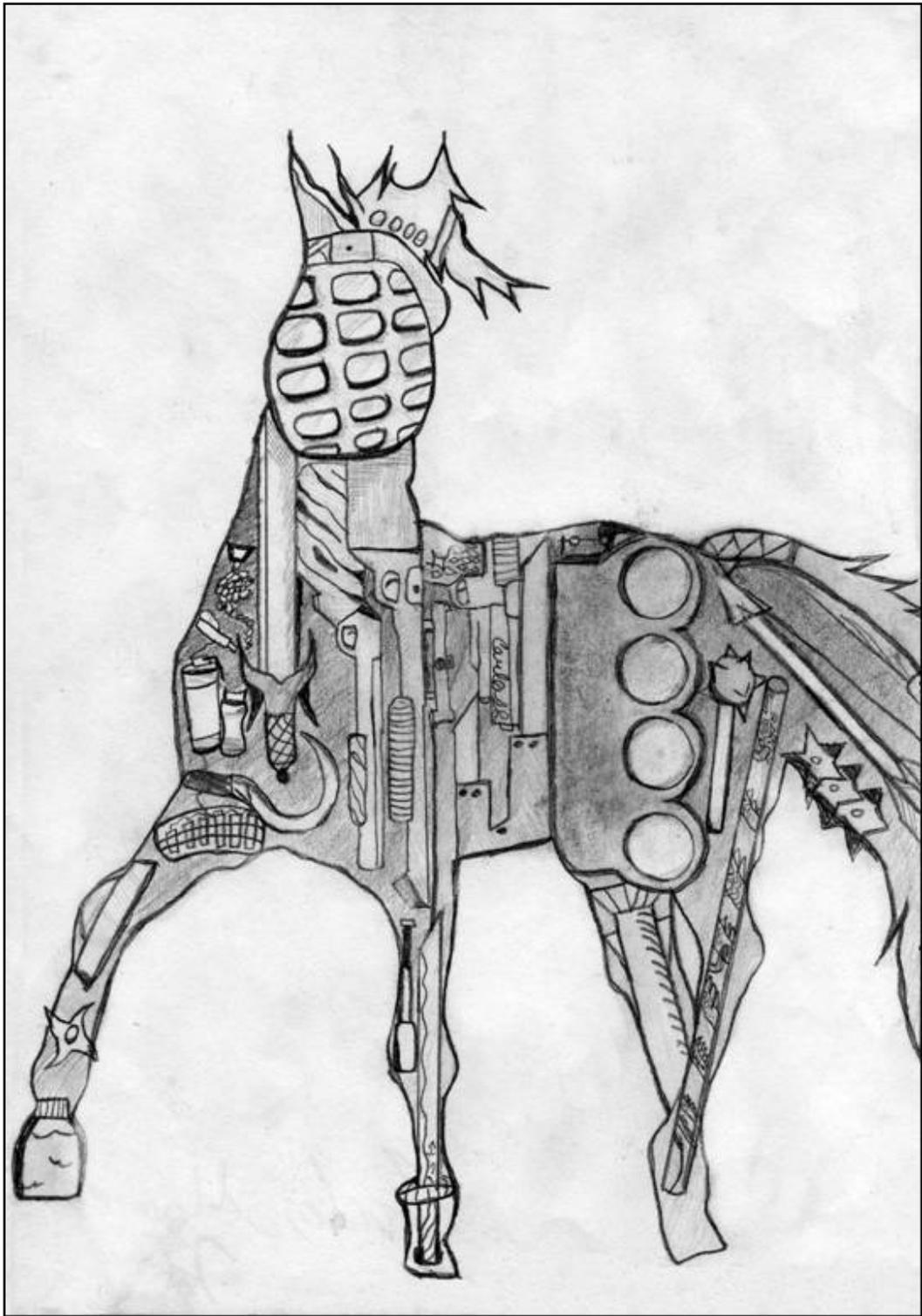


Figure 25. *Texture Drawing*, Art Student, From the Collection of Mona Lisa.

gangs, drugs and other controversial themes. Yet, these types of images surface in her students' work regardless of restrictions. Her curriculum emphasizes art techniques and methods, some art history, and a modicum of art criticism in combination with interrogation of some meaningful images from students' lives. Her students bring these visual images depicting provocative content, controversial issues, and violence into their art work because they permeate her students' culture. Hallquist (2008), a regular high school art teacher/researcher, poses questions regarding the content restrictions of students' art work in art education and wonders about the legal implications for art teachers and her students' right to free speech. "Do students have the right to express their ideas even if their ideas they are unpopular or controversial?" "Does establishing such boundaries mean students will stop thinking about sex, abusing drugs, being depressed about their achievement, feeling alienated, or any other physical and/or psychological challenges teenagers may face?" (Hallquist, 2008, p. 44). Might the images and themes in students' art work stimulate positive dialogue about social challenges students confront, provide opportunities for teachers, administrators, and parents to assist students in coping with the myriad of the issues and problems? A structured discussion about the images, comments, and the "life outside of school" issues that these students encounter could be beneficial, in that students could voice their fears, frustrations and challenges through discussion and art. The following are some of the events the students discussed while creating art during the data collection/follow-up phase of this research project.

- **STABBING AT LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL**
- **IRAQ WAR: FIVE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY**
- **DISMISSAL DRIVE-BY SHOOTING AT KOZOL**
- **SOUTHERN BLACK CHURCH ATTACKED BY GUNMAN**
- **STUDENT DISCHARGED FROM A TREATMENT CENTER: SHOOTS WORKER AT A SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT CENTER.**
- **LOCAL UNIVERSITY/HIGH SCHOOL CLOSES: RACIAL SLURS /THREATS OF VIOLENCE FOUND IN BATHROOMS**
- **24 STUDENTS KILLED BY GUN VIOLENCE IN METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT.**
- **SIX DEAD, MANY INJURED BY GUNMAN AT NIU.**

What follows is my reflection after the university shooting.

St. Valentine's Day Massacre. 2008. Northern Illinois University. 3:06 p.m.

I was on my way to an appointment at the writing center when my husband called to say that there had been a shooting on campus and the university was closed and on lock down. A call from the writing center confirmed this information and cancelled my appointment. I immediately turned on the news and listened as this story unfolded. The images were horrifying. How could this be happening at NIU in rural northern Illinois? An unfathomable, unenviable, unpredictable, random act of violence... six students (5 innocent victims and the troubled shooter) killed at the close of a geology lecture in Cole Hall. One firearm, three handguns. Why? February 14, 2008 will forever be etched in history as NIU's Valentine's Day Massacre. Images of blood, violence, police tape, paramedics, ambulances, students crying, people in shock, traumatic stress. Our institution is now a war zone. This event has had and will continue to have far reaching impact and implications on campus safety and security, gun control, mental health/illness, on what is considered war and/or terrorism. I was concerned about my son at Bradley and was relieved to hear his voice when he called that afternoon. I find myself frozen and unfocused – unable to write. I need

to work on the analysis of my data. The news is saturated with information about NIU, the students, and the shooter. So many sad and tragic stories. I thought about my observations at my research sites. These high school students expressed concern about their safety and security and their peers at other local high schools, the closure of NIU in December due to racial slurs and threats of violence, like Virginia Tech. What is happening to our society, our culture?

(Personal reflection, 2/16/2008)

Events like these impact students and affect learning. They have affected me and my ability to stay focused on my dissertation. These types of events are discussed by students in and out of classrooms, including the art classroom. Curriculum and student art work can deal with these themes. Ina's work is a good example. In this art work she drew a corn stalk with three large ears of corn and attached to one side of the stalk is a large anatomical heart with veins and vessels. Ina also included other symbols: an open book, an upside-down cross, capsules and pills, a syringe (see Figure 26). She told her art teacher that she addressed symbolically in her work some of the issues that have an impact on and that concern her: education, spirituality, drugs, and sexuality.

Is it beneficial to have students express their thoughts/concerns visually in art work or keep them contained, under the surface, and censored? Is it valuable to have students respond verbally during in-class discussions and in written self-reflections or remain silent without opportunities for moderated self-expression about important real-life and real-world issues and concerns? The art classroom can be a place for such dialogue that encourages students to express their ideas, take part in a democratic society, and become active citizens instead of "just waiting for the world to change."

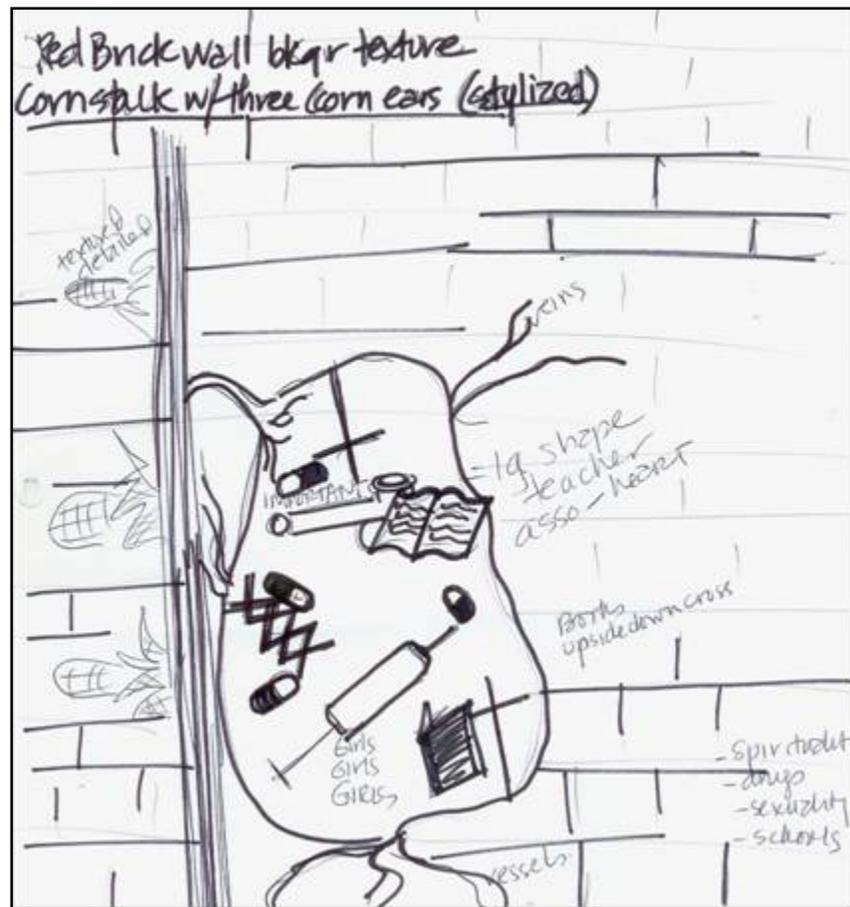


Figure 26: Visual Field Note, 11/7/2007.

Due to the nature of the “at-risk” environment in which the students in this study find themselves being educated, there was open channel of discourse regarding these and other personal topics. Employing an approach to art education with students at-risk in alternative high schools that allows students to examine imagery and reflect upon their own images, images of others, and the magnitude of images and issues that they encounter in everyday life is paramount. This approach makes art education a transformative and powerful social practice where education can then be a place for “reenchanting our culture, our youth... and connecting art to its integrative roots in the

larger whole and the web of relationships in which art [and education] exists” (Gablik, 1991, p. 112).

### Coping with Students’ Traumatic Stress, Sadness, and Pain

Like art therapists, art teachers in regular and alternative high schools are exposed to students’ stresses and trauma. Art teachers have minimal education in their art education classes at the university level to prepare them for these types of classroom situations. They vicariously experience students’ sorrows and pain. They have learned through personal experience and on-the-job training how to cope with a multiplicity of student issues and problems that they deal with on a daily basis and to intervene as needed. Mona draws boundaries between school and the personal. She has to. She explains that she listens, is sensitive, and tries to be authentic and empathic with her students; however, at times she is at a loss for words, like when one of her students asked her to adopt her baby. Louise notices that she becomes sarcastic as a way to manage being exposed to so much stress, pain, and sadness. She uses her painting as a stress reliever. For Louise, letting go of her students is another challenge. She explains that she gets to know her students at a deep level and gets *really* attached to them. “It’s what makes me a good teacher, I think. I care about my students and I show them by encouraging them and letting them know that they are capable. I am very honest with my students. I tell them what they are doing well and areas that need improvement in their art work. They need to move on, but I worry that without the

kind of support they get in my class and in this alternative educational setting that they may not be successful.”

### Transformation Art Pedagogy

Mona and Louise are art educators whose pedagogy crosses the disciplines of art, education, and therapy. They are art teachers who understand art’s power to transform their students (Dunn-Snow & D’Amelio, 2000). They are empathic, caring individuals who nurture their students’ capabilities and sense of self in a generally therapeutic way (Rubin, 1982). But what is it that they do? Is it art education therapy or therapeutic art education as espoused by Lowenfeld (1957) and Henley (1992)? Is it contemporary art education or school art therapy or something in between?

Art education and art therapy share historical roots. Art teachers and art therapists speak the same language: art. They balance the roles of artists, teachers, and therapists. Art and imagery are the foundation for both professions. The early founders of art therapy, Kramer and Cane for example, were art educators. Many art therapists are familiar with their art pedagogy. The pioneering work of Lowenfeld (1957) that bridged the two fields used the phrase “art education therapy.” Many art educators still view art therapy through Lowenfeld’s child-centered lens, while many others avoid it because it negates the “disciplinary” conception of the field (Eisner & Ecker, 1970; Eisner, 1987, 1988; Greer, 1984). Yet, by identifying areas of intersection in art education and art therapy, the differences may not seem as disparate.

Art therapy and art education have been conflated over the past several decades. Many scholars (Anderson, 1980; Andrus, 2006; Dunn-Snow & D'Amelio, 2000; Henley, 1992; Kramer, 1980; Lowenfeld, 1957; Rubin, 1980; St. John, 1986; Ulman, 1978) have addressed the relationship between art therapy and art education. Rubin (1980) articulates the difference by explaining that art therapy combines both art and therapy with some educational components, while art education blends art and education with some therapeutic elements. However, the distinction between art education and art therapy is not clear-cut. One of the most salient points of intersection has been the notion that children make art grounded in their own experiences: a point made by most visual culture advocates. Both art therapists and teachers respond to childrens' visual documents, although they are educated to respond in different ways. Contemporary art education, with its focus on social and critical practice, the creation of art work that includes self-identification and students' visual culture, blurs the lines and resembles art as therapy. However, one of the most salient differences is that the primary goal of art therapy is therapeutic. For a comprehensive examination of the similarities, differences, and connections between contemporary art education and school art therapy see Appendix H.

In the alternative high school environment, the visual arts can reach students at-risk who are coping with many different social and emotional issues. The alternative high schools in this study make little or no distinction between art education and art therapy. The terms are used interchangeably. The confusion/conflation may be because what occurs in the art education classrooms may

look like a therapy due to an emphasis on self-expression. Louise explained that every assignment has to include feelings as a part of it. Her students' art must have something about them in it. Louise's teaching practices closely parallels Henley's (1992) definition of therapeutic art education, which

refers to art which recognizes the uses of the therapeutic benefits of the art process. It does not pretend to engage in psychotherapy or analysis, nor does it attempt to replace analytically oriented support services such as counseling. This approach aspires to see children as individuals, to take their concerns seriously and respond in ways that are supportive and productive. (p. 16)

Because teachers like Louise facilitate therapeutic art projects with emotional components, they are sometimes referred to as art therapists by their administrators. For this reason, art education in these settings is sometimes viewed as art therapy. Louise comments that she does therapeutic art but is not an art therapist and that administrators do not understand the differences between art therapy and art education. Art therapy may be viewed more favorably than art education in her setting. One administrator suggested she should continue her education in art therapy. However, despite wanting more knowledge about art therapy, the two art teachers are clear that they are art teachers and not art therapists.

While teachers do not practice therapy, they may use art education as therapy as Henley (1992) suggests, and like art therapists, they often deal with behavioral issues in a therapeutic way. For example, when students disrespect their art teachers, they are encouraged to think about their behavior. Mona remarked they remember that a teacher had this conversation with them and made them think about how they treat

other people. It's therapeutic, but it's not therapy. Louise's art assignments relate to feeling identification, identity exploration, and recovery issues. Her pedagogy and practice combine art, education, and therapeutic elements.

### Caring

“Caring teachers listen and respond differently to their students” (Noddings, 2005, p. 19) and assist students to be “recipients of care” (p. 108). Mona and Louise make real connections with their students, genuinely communicate concern, support, and empathy. They also reflect Glasser's (1965) personal responsibility and Maslow's (1968) esteem building. Many alternative schools follow Maslow's theory articulated in *Towards a Psychology of Being* (1968) by fostering students' basic needs for food and shelter, limits and stability, family and community, worth and personal growth. They create a culture of caring and facilitate a sense of openness between themselves and their students that promotes teaching and learning (Groves, 1998).

### Curriculum

The art education curriculum in these art classrooms is open and flexible with fluid boundaries. With this approach to curriculum, teachers are able to adhere to state and district fine arts goals and work with multi-age /multi-level students in a revolving-door setting. While some directives are constant, students and teachers negotiate other aspects of their course of study. With the encouragement and guidance of their art teachers, students move at their own pace through the art curriculum.

Students are offered options and choices and alternative assignments based on each student's individual needs. Mona remarks that rather than "shoving the curriculum down their throats, I mold it around their individual needs." Her practice addresses one of the factors inherent in the school experience that educational theorist Barth (1991) contends contributes to depression, dropping out, drugs, jail, and suicide and that is "irrelevant curriculum that students must endure and frequently ignore" (p. 126).

### Communication

Communication between students and teachers can be open. Art teachers can be available to their students for technical as well as emotional support. They can serve as sounding boards and/or confidantes. They can challenge students' assumptions about self and others. The art teachers in these settings talk one on one with their students about problems and act as a witness who listens as students discuss critical social/cultural concerns in the class context. Mona explains that she listens in class to her students' conversations and statements to understand where they are coming from – their perspective. She tries to understand what it is like to be them. Mona and Louise's pedagogy and practice reflect characteristics of alternative education high school programs that include highly individualized, personalized, and flexible programs, a student-centered intentional community, small class size with low teacher/student ratios and student choice and voice (Aron, 2003; de La Rosa, 1998; Dugger & Dugger, 1998; National Association of State Board of Education, 1996; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Leone & Drakeford, 1999).

### The “Other,” the Outsider

Mona and Louise’s teaching practice reflects a feminist approach to pedagogy, perhaps unintentionally, via shifting teacher and student power relationships, creating an atmosphere where students are empowered and active in their own education. Feminist art education overlaps multiple domains, including the art world, the women’s art movement, women’s studies, and education. In their book *Women, Art and Education*, Collins and Sandell (1984) argue for a pluralistic approach that addresses issues of gender equity and power relationships in art education (p. 178) and contend that feminist art education has psychological, social, and aesthetic significance.

According to Dalton (2001), this approach involves “the rhetoric of cooperation and care rather than individualism and competition, fluidity and flexibility rather than rigid subject boundaries, and bricolage or gathering and eclectic modes of creativity are appearing more often instead of linear, scientific ‘planning modes’” (p. 136).

Feminist methodologies that characterize their pedagogy include the rhetoric of care and communication, fluidity and flexibility in curriculum, and bricolage. As bricoleurs, they gather and use materials resourcefully and facilitate the creation of art from diverse resources. They creatively juggle multiple tasks to make interpersonal, social, and metaphorical connections simultaneously in the classroom. Like other feminist educators, they incorporate some aspects of “women's art, pluralism and diversity of subject matter, 'other' perspectives, and multicultural initiatives” (p. 136).

### Students as the “Other”

Students observed as a part of this study view themselves as ‘the other’ and frequently are viewed by their peers, teachers, administrators, parents as stupid, different, losers, quitters, or addicts. These students at-risk are marginalized – outside the mainstream traditional educational system by nature of the fact they go to alternative high schools or are in treatment for substance abuse. They believe that they don’t fit in the mainstream for a variety of reasons – their behaviors, their disabilities, their learning styles, their problems, their families, their socio/economic status. The list goes on. They may be viewed as different by teachers and administrators in their home schools when in reality, there is minimal difference. They are a diverse group. According to Louise, they represent a microcosm of high school teenagers struggling with real-life problems. Many of them believe that adults in their lives don’t understand them and that they are helpless to transcend their problems. They admit getting in trouble but would argue, “who ain’t bad in school?” or “who doesn’t get in trouble at home?” These students believe that they really aren’t *all* that bad. The lyrics to John Mayer’s song “Waiting for the World to Change” seem to sum it up for these students,

Me and all my friends, we're all misunderstood, they say we stand for nothing and, there's no way we ever could... we just feel like we don't have the means, to rise above it. So we keep waiting, waiting for the world to change, we keep waiting on the world to change. (Mayer, 2006)

JaNelle's art folder and the dialogue with her art teacher described in Chapter 4 specifically illustrate many of the issues and concerns of students at-risk. They are dealing with a cadre of family issues, divorce, abandonment and loss, alcoholism, and/or mental illness. They are coping with many social issues, including gangs, guns, violence – community and school, pregnancy and teen parenting. Many traditional high school students are also impacted by these issues.

### Researcher as the Outsider

I made three site visits today. It became apparent at the last school that I visited, my outsider status was manifesting. One student made it quite clear that I was new, different, and outside the culture. Almost immediately this student said, "I hate white people; you'll never make it at this school. You'll get hurt." Issues of trust, safety, and security were evident to me, as was "the racial divide" (see Figure 27). There may also be a gender and age divide as well. It did make me wonder and question my safety in this setting after the student described what would happen to me at this school. He said that I would leave banged up with a black eye. Later, when I discussed this with the art teacher, she discussed how she had been slammed against the wall by this student some years ago when he was fourteen...he's now 19. She told me that he was a JSO (juvenile sex offender), which did explain some of the violent, threatening talk and his lack of trust. This setting may take longer for students to accept me.

The art teacher in this setting, who is an artist/teacher with no background in education or therapy, was eager to share her experience working with these students at-risk in a residential school. She felt that she had a lot to say and I suspected that she did after observing her class for one day. Unfortunately this school was closed by the state before I could return.

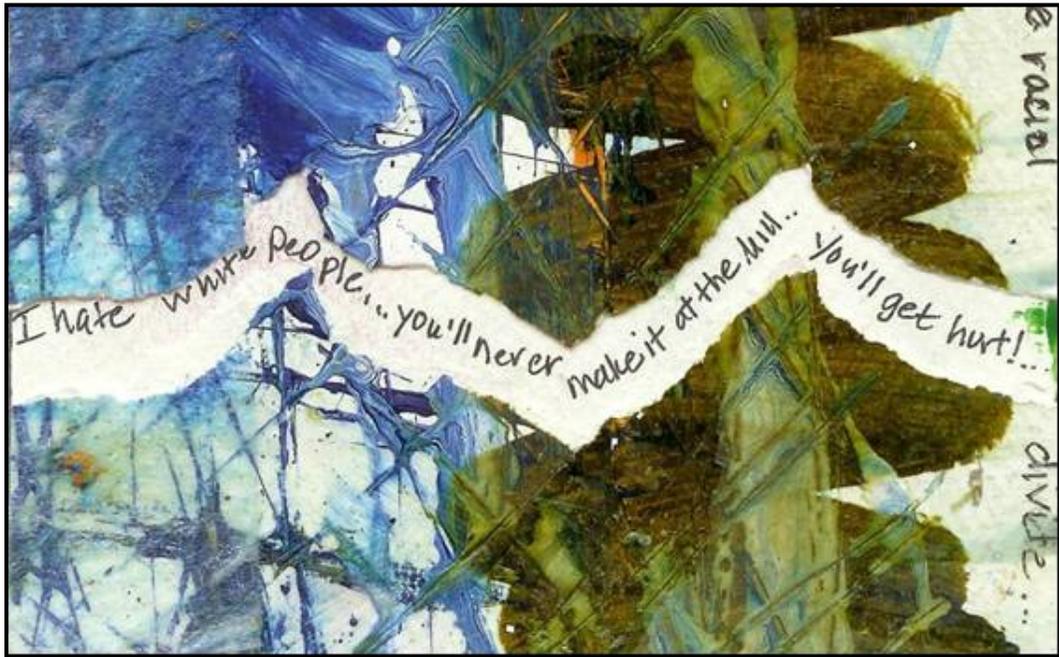


Figure 27. *The racial divide*, Field note/visual memo, 3/12/07.

The previous experience quickly taught me that I *was* and would be an outsider in my other research sites. Deutsch (2004) describes the “outsider within” role as a challenge that offers “unique opportunities for information gathering” (p. 898). I agree. Situating myself as an outsider within different alternative high school cultures was a unique experience that afforded me unique opportunities as researcher. As a privileged Caucasian, middle-class, middle-aged, Jewish female researcher entering alternative high schools composed of racially and ethnically diverse youth, I was different – much like the students I would soon observe. I was unknown. I did stand out from their cultures. For that reason, it was important to get to know the surroundings, their cultures, and this was done initially through observation. In addition, time was allotted to build relationships with the teachers, their students, and

staff and learn procedures in each site. These students may lack trust and need extra time to develop connections with new people in their worlds.

Deutsch (2004) commented that as a researcher, she felt torn between having the participant-observer role which demanded “participation without bias or influence” and one in which she was involved in her research participants’ lives (p. 888). In both sites my outsider status shifted as my research progressed. For instance, security guards at the entrance of Kozol became familiar with me and did not ask me to see my ID at each visit. After a few months, I was listed as a frequent visitor at the school; consequently, I no longer was asked to sign in. In Birch, I wore a name tag, like other staff, and that gave me freedom to swipe myself in and out of the school entrance without assistance, which made me look less like an outsider. Other things that altered my outsider status were the following: students asking for my opinion about their projects, technical assistance with art processes, talking to me about their work, or helping students search for images on the computer. Students in both settings wanted to know more about me and my research. One young lady was shocked that I was in college “at your age?” She thought only young people closer to her age went to college. Finally, both art teachers allowed me to assist them with various tasks, like answering the phone, getting supplies for students, and cleaning up the art room after class, which also made me appear less like an outsider. I was pleased to assist these teachers in any way that I could since they had allowed me in their classrooms.

## Relationships

### Teacher-Student/Student-Teacher Relationships

Raywid (1981) explains that “human relationships are among the most educative features of an alternative school [and that] the most single prevalent feature of alternative education is its emphasis on interpersonal relationships within the school” (pp. 65-66). Accordingly, in the art classroom in these alternative high schools, art teachers spend considerable time facilitating a sense of compassion between students and teachers and emphasize relationship building in the art classroom. This is a unique component of teaching and learning in the alternative setting. Their compassionate approach resonates with Noddings’ (2005) ideas regarding caring that she advocates as crucial in education with all students – not just those educated in alternative schools. Both teachers in discussions about their teaching philosophy acknowledge that they are nurturing what is at the heart of humanness – art and compassion. That is the heart of the mission for these art educators, who describe a comfort level teaching students at-risk who need a great deal of love, encouragement, and support to succeed (see Figure 28). What is special in these classrooms? These art teachers see art as a social enterprise that fosters relationships and, therefore, cultivate relationships between themselves and their students in the context of creating art.



Figure 28. *Collage, Art Student, From the collection of Louise.*

### Reciprocity

Both Louise and Mona describe a reciprocal relationship between themselves and their students. These teachers find teaching art with students at-risk rewarding. Mona believes that she learns as much from her students as they learn from her, while Louise believes her students teach her as well. Both teachers agree learning is a circular process that occurs when each teaches her students and they, in turn, teach each other. According to Freire (2000), “without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education” (pp. 92-93). Art is about communication (Kaminsky, 1999) and dialogue. Dialogue fosters communication between teacher and student, teacher and the visual image, and student and visual

image. The three-way triangular “dialogical” relationship connects teaching and learning through the imagery (Kay, 2007).

### Rewards

Stories like this one make teaching students at-risk in alternative education programs for Mona and Louise worthwhile.

**Mona:** I had a male student who originally came into art class with an attitude of belligerence recently come back to visit me. He told me that he was working hard now and that he just liked coming in [the art room]. He made a point of reminding me he was not an artist. He told me that art used to be one of his one of his worst classes, but art class calmed him. He could do things differently from other students, be ok, and add his own to it [his art work] without being yelled at. He felt that I did not judge how well he did the project but the fact that he met the criteria. He said that in my class he was working through that and it was interesting for him. Wow! That was neat to hear. I much prefer this alternative setting than a traditional high school. I never thought that I would. I was not specifically trained but I put the two together [art and alternative education].

This event said something to Mona about the safe environment that she establishes in her classroom that allows her students to go at their own pace and be able to do creative and expressive work without tight restrictions. One of Louise’s greatest rewards goes back to a student she inspired who “hated” art when she first came into her art class.

**Louise:** This girl didn’t want to have anything to do with art and she was very insecure and down on herself. I started her on a collage. I only worked with her for about three months. Before she left she asked me where she could buy a set of oil pastels. She had little family involvement and was on her own. She returned to regular school, graduated, came back to visit and brought all her art projects to show me. She told me that I had inspired her to take more art classes and that she would never have taken an art class if she had not met me. I’ve had four or five students who have told me that over the years. She got a summer job through the local arts council doing art with kids. She told me that she wants to be an art teacher. That’s what makes this job so special, when you inspire your students and they realize they can make art and help others.

### Nurture or Nature or Both

Despite teaching in an emotionally charged chaotic context with the potential for violence and acting-out behavior, Mona and Louise are able to create nurturing and supportive learning environments. The low teacher-to-student ratio allows these art teachers to nurture their students, know them individually, and work with them intimately. Within this intense milieu, they each establish clear boundaries and firm expectations while encouraging their students to put forth effort and take risks in a non-judgmental manner. They are patient. They assess students' effort in addition to skill.

Mona explains that she is firm yet authentic with her students. Louise sits down while her students are working on their art just to talk. One special education teacher described Louise as having a special knack, an innate ability, to get her students to open up and do things that they wouldn't do for anyone else. One student describes "Mrs. N." as having a unique style that he can't put his finger on.

Most significantly, art education works in these schools because of a combination of factors: their personalities, the relationships and the dialogue that they facilitate, and their pedagogical style. Mona and Louise have some background experience working with at-risk students, but it is their personalities and natural abilities to make authentic connections with students and nurture them that are notable. These traits and behaviors are similar to those exhibited or practiced by highly qualified, experienced art therapists. However, in the classroom context the discussions they facilitate and relationships they create are at the very heart of the teaching-learning process, as it represents "the meaning system mutually constructed

by teachers and their students... Dialogue [contributes] to reflective awareness in teacher[s] and students [and] provides opportunities for deepened relations with others” (Greene, 1991, p. 8).

### What is normal?

#### Settings

In many high school classrooms, students create powerful images and art work while engaged in deep conversations about real-life concerns. Teaching, making and learning about art occur while dealing with complex issues (social, emotional, personal, cultural). However, in alternative art classrooms, this process is more important than the final art products that students produce. Art teachers in alternative high schools are teaching within systems in a constant state of flux. While regular art teachers face student absenteeism and students coming into classes mid term, the frequency of new students being adding and dropped from class rosters appears greater in alternative settings. Small class sizes are typical for alternative high schools as opposed to larger populations in traditional high school art classes. Also, in the alternative art classroom setting, as opposed to the traditional setting, students are at different grade levels, different places in the art curriculum, and are functioning at different developmental levels – in maturity and in art.

## Students

The students observed in this study carry an “at-risk” signifier. Art teacher respondents say that their students are not much different than students in the traditional high school settings, just that their problems and/or life situations may be more visible. Their art work frequently mirrors identity conflicts typical during the adolescent stage of development (Burton, 1981; Freedman, 2003; Linesch, 1988). The art work produced by students at-risk, due to their label or that they attend “alternative” schools, has not always been considered the same caliber or as competitive as students’ in regular art high school art classes. However, some students in these situations have produced work is as graphic and/or technically sophisticated as their adolescent counterparts.

## Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 presented the art teacher respondents’ reflections on their philosophies about art, pedagogy, and curricula with students at-risk in alternative high schools. In the form of an epilogue, this chapter addressed many teaching challenges expressed by the art teachers in this study. The final chapter will offer implications for art education, recommendations for future research, and personal reflections.



chapter six  
CULMINATING  
THOUGHTS

## CHAPTER 6

### CULMINATING THOUGHTS

This chapter reflects on the implications and recommendations that result from this study and also includes my continuing reflections. This study was driven by the following essential questions: How do students and teachers in alternative high schools settings characterize art education? Sub-questions addressed as a part of this study included: What teaching and learning occur in art education classrooms with adolescent students at-risk in the alternative high school settings? What is the art teacher's role in this type of setting? What are the goals of the art teacher? What are the goals of the students?

From the insights gleaned from adolescent students at-risk and their art teachers, art education is characterized as a social practice. While art teaching is centered on the elements and principles of art and technical processes, learning in the art classrooms in alternative high schools occurs in the context of the student/teacher relationships. Teaching, making, and learning about art occur while dealing with complex issues (social, emotional, personal, cultural). The making of art is focused on self-expression and self-identity. Often this aspect of the learning process is more important than the final art products that students produce.

The art teachers in this study perform multiple roles of as art teachers, as artists, as *bricoleur* (Dalton, 2001), as mediator, as witness, as leader, and sometimes, as therapist. As artists they facilitate special creative projects and events in the schools. As teachers, they assist in the formation of students' identity, facilitate personal expression and the meaningful creation of images/artifacts, and address socio-cultural issues and traumatic stress in the art classroom. As *bricoleur*, each of the art teacher respondents in this study is resourceful teaching art with whatever materials are available. They juggle multiple tasks and make multiple interpersonal and metaphorical connections with students and their art. As mediator, these art teachers settle altercations between students, negotiate the art curriculum, and resolve conflicts between students and themselves. Art teachers act as witness to students' art-making process and are often a bystander who listens to students' social and cultural concerns in the class context. The two art teachers create nurturing, supportive environments, set firm boundaries and expectations for their students, talk one-to-one with their students about problems while they are engaged in making art, and serve as a sounding board much like an art therapist in school settings. Finally, both Mona and Louise assume leadership roles in their schools by advocating for art education and their students, securing grants for special projects like a school mural, participating in special projects outside the art classrooms (art contests, district art and talent shows, and vocalizing concerns in staff and team meeting regarding safety, communication and teacher support.

The art teacher respondents have multiple goals for their students. Mona's goals are to look at images and art work in their environment, relate to it, and reflect upon it; create an environment in the art classroom where students feel that they can express themselves, within reason, both verbally and visually; give students the freedom to relate art to their own lives, to motivate students with a curriculum that is connected to students' lives, teach formal elements and principles of art that connects meaningful to the students; develop students' self identity. Louise has similar goals: to teach students that art is a part of everyday life; to get students to express their feelings – their identity, to boost their self-esteem; to inspire her students to put some passion and emotion in their art – something of themselves; to think creatively, experiment with materials, and practice new techniques in art.

While the focus of this study was on the art teacher respondents' pedagogy and practice, observations indicated that the adolescent students at-risk as part of this study had the following goals. First, many students verbalized that they were taking art for the first time, and had "art angst" and did not want to be in art class, while others stated that they wanted to pursue art as a career. Second, students stated that they wanted to finish projects and move through the art curriculum. Many students expressed their desire to earn their art credits and get out of class, either each day or after successful completion of the program. Third, some students at-risk, who were observed as a part of this study, discussed with their art teachers their wish to return to their home school, while others explained that they wanted to stay in art class with the art teacher respondents, even after completing the art curriculum or the treatment

program. Finally, I observed some students say that it was important to them to graduate high school and go to college, several others verbalized their plans to begin basic military training in the armed forces after graduation, while some stated that they did not want to grow up.

### Implications for Art Education

In considering the implications of this study, I returned to the original notion of *torn*. As noted in Chapter 5, poems were created as an arts-based research process to understand the data. In poetic form I played with the words/metaphors associated with the words *torn* and *form* and in the collage process, which I used in my visual memos, I played with the idea of how something torn can be made whole. I discovered that I needed to move from torn to whole, much like the art teachers in this study were moving their students beyond torn to something holistic. The following poem helped shape my analysis and guide my conclusions.

#### *Poem 3*

from T.O.R.N. to trans FORM  
 ripped, a(part),  
 torn to pieces,  
 not whole  
 torn,  
 not complete,  
 torn  
 in parts,  
 torn between two things

to take shape  
 to form

in[form]  
 de[form]  
 re[form]  
 con[form]  
 [form]ation  
 [form]ative  
 [form]fitting  
 [form]ulating  
 per[form]  
 trans[form]

art education  
**transformation**  
 -lisa kay (April 30, 2008)

Students, teachers, and researchers can benefit from using arts-based research in both visual and textual research in and out of the classroom. The arts-based process can facilitate re(search) and development of concepts prior to and during students' art making. Art teachers can use a tactile art process (like the bead collage) to help them and their students reflect on their experiences. Researchers can integrate their own art practice as research to thematically analyze field notes, critically reflect upon related images, and illuminate their own experience as a researcher. Multiple forms of data (visual and textual field notes, creative writing, and interview transcripts) can facilitate research insights. Arts-based research allows students, art teachers, and researchers to link their ideas in a non-linear way that brings a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Louise wonders what makes it all work. Is it the art? Is it the approach? Is it "me" or is it a holistic thing? This raises the questions: Is it the art, their teaching strategies, or who these women are as individuals and their personalities that make it

work? What gives these teachers the skills, strength, and forbearance to work with students at-risk in these unique environments? The data from this research presented in Chapter 4 indicate that their teaching is effective due to a combination of factors: their personalities, the relationships and the dialogue that they facilitate, and their pedagogical style. It works because it reflects a feminist approach to pedagogy that shifts teacher and student power relationships, creates an atmosphere where students are empowered and active in their own education. It works because it employs the rhetoric of cooperation and care. It works because their art education curriculum is fluid, flexible, and context-dependent. It works because of the combination of art, education, and therapeutic elements. It works because it is a transformation of education.

In the book *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*, Giroux (1992) envisions pedagogy as “a configuration of textual, verbal, and visual practices that seek to engage the processes through which people understand themselves and the ways in which they engage with others and their environments” (p. 3). Giroux argues that “educators need to approach learning not merely as the acquisition of knowledge but as the production of cultural practices that offer students a sense of identity, place, and hope” (p. 146). Mona and Louise provide such a configuration of educational practice that offers their students a sense of identity, a sense of place, and a sense of hope as illustrated by Mona’s belief that “...teaching [art] needs to be far more responsive to the variety of students’ talents, readiness to

learn, interests, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2001, p. 3).

This is precisely what Apple (2006) affirms is possible when educators imagine and sustain a vision of hope for a better society, culturally, and politically. As contemporary artist Lacy (1994) maintains, it is imperative “to search for the good and make it matter. This is the real challenge for the artist. Not simply to transform ideas or revelations into matter but to make those revelations actually matter” (outside back cover). These art teachers search for the positive and make their teacher/student interactions matter. This is their challenge – to make art education matter for their students and themselves. They facilitate art work that has meaning for their students; they have developed ways of working that can be valuable to all art teachers whether they work in alternative settings or not.

### Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations may be important to alternative education, general education, art education, and/or art therapy:

1. It is recommended that art teachers working with students at-risk in alternative high school settings employ a visual culture approach to art education, situate their curriculum in the realm of contemporary visual culture, and infuse their instructional units/lesson plans with the work of contemporary art and other visual culture artifacts. Such a postmodern art education curriculum that includes visual culture

artifacts and contemporary artists can meet alternative education, program, district, and state goals as well as the needs of students at-risk by blending art making and related skill development with visual culture. According to Madeja (2002), the inclusion of visual culture in art education provides alternatives for students to illustrate self-knowledge through the making, creating, organizing and ordering of imagery. Visual culture in art education, with its emphasis on small versus grand narratives related to social issues, the multiplicity of imagery (movies, video games, comics, the internet, fashion, advertising, toys and games, and fine art) and narrative art from students' experiences and individual stories is applicable to art education in alternative high schools. It may be important to teach formal elements and principles of art, design, and technique like the art teacher respondents in this study; however, art classes with students at-risk in these settings can offer more. The art classroom can be a site for increased personal inquiry and reflection on art with both individual and social content. While the teachers in this study do more than just teach the fundamentals of art and allow the expression of art with individual content, this alternative approach to art education theory, practice, and content can be applied to multi-age/multi-level classes with students at-risk. It would further address the issues related to students' identity and beliefs, sense of place and feelings of agency. The issues that these students carry in their *backpacks* into the art classrooms (violence, drugs, gangs, suicide, teen pregnancy and parenting, divorce, alcoholism, addictions) can be more directly addressed.

Given that many contemporary artists produce artwork that confronts social, political, emotional, and cultural issues like those issues that students bring into the art classroom in alternative high schools, it is recommended that art teachers situate their curriculum in the realm of contemporary visual culture artifacts and infuse their instructional units or lesson plans with art work by contemporary artists. Both art teachers in this study talked to me about incorporating more contemporary artists into their curriculum but have not done so as yet. Louise's students read about the individuals who have had traumatic lives impacted by gangs, drugs, and abuse in their regular classes. Learning about contemporary artists in art education, for example, like Jean-Michel Basquiat (Deitch, Sirmans, & Vassell, 2007), whose artwork deals with race, identity, childhood traumatic stress, and drug addiction, would be meaningful for adolescent students at-risk in both research sites since these are issues that touch these students' lives. Another artist whose work may be significant is Kiki Smith. Her artwork deals with language, the body as a container of knowledge, and the differences between private perceptions and public stereotypes (Gaudelius & Spiers, 2002; Art 21 web site).

2. Pre-service art teacher education should include an introductory course that provides foundational information about and experience with art therapy practices and educates future teachers about the similarities and differences between art education and art therapy. After completion of such a course art teachers will not be art therapists, but they may have additional knowledge useful in their teaching practice. Additionally, it is recommended that art teacher preparation programs more

adequately prepare future teachers for what they may encounter outside the college classroom, specifically how to deal with the needs of students at-risk in both the regular and alternative educational settings. Mona and Louise felt their university's methodologies and practices had not prepared them for the reality of working with students at-risk. They describe their experience as "trial by fire" and report being thrown into situations and having to figure things out for themselves. Many teachers do receive on-the-job training and attend staff in-services but since many students at-risk are funneled into the regular art classroom and art teachers in every context are dealing with an increase in the number of adolescent students at-risk, more education and knowledge is needed. Basic art therapy information may meet this need for pre-service art teachers.

3. Alternative educational settings should be available as clinical observation and/or student teacher placement sites. While pre-service art teachers sometimes have opportunities to volunteer for clinical hours in at-risk schools, Mona believes that more art teachers should do their student teaching in an alternative educational setting like hers to learn effective teaching and behavior management strategies that are applicable to any classroom situation.

4. In-service art teachers and regular classroom teachers need more information about students "at risk." They need exposure to art education and art therapy techniques for use with students "at risk." During the course of my doctoral studies, including the time when I was collecting my data and writing my dissertation, I supervised art teachers in their student teacher placements. Many cooperating art

teachers were intrigued with my work and wanted more information about the art therapy and art education with students at-risk. One experienced teacher, working at the elementary level, suggested an on-line course for Continuing Development Professional Units (CDPU) credit to augment his education and enhance his teaching practice and contends that other art teachers would also be interested since there is not a similar course available in an on-line format. Louise made a similar suggestion when she recommended a college class called *Art Therapy for Educators*. Therefore, an art therapy class (or in-service development) for generalists and art teachers would be very useful.

5. More dialogue, conversations, and connections need to be made between arts-based research practices and visual culture. Visual culture in arts-based research encourages researchers to navigate, critically interrogate, and create visual images connected to and about the research data. Arts-based research practices and visual culture operate in tandem, informing and validating the other. The application of visual culture enhanced, guided, and was inseparable from my research practice.

### Future Study

1. This qualitative research study was intentionally designed with a small sample to gather a thick description of the art teachers' experiences teaching students at-risk. Additional research should be conducted in other alternative school sites with art teachers and art therapists to build and expand on the results.

2. Art teachers reported a sense of isolation from other art teachers. Further research could be conducted to address this ongoing issue in art education.

3. Research suggests collaborative research between art education and art therapy could be useful for both fields. Patton and Anderson (1976) stressed the importance of fostering a spirit of cooperation between art education and art therapy and argued “that clearer delineation between the two fields need not thwart the beneficial relationship between them” (p. 23). In 1980, the National Committee on Arts for the Handicapped sponsored a joint conference of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and the American Art Therapy Association (AATA) to consider the roles of art education and art therapy in providing art experiences for special needs students (Bush, 1997). In that same year a special issue of *Art Education* was dedicated to art therapy so that art educators could better understand art therapy.

Some ways collaboration might be accomplished include:

- a. Another special issue of *Art Education* or *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* dedicated to contemporary art education and school art therapy practices with students at-risk in regular and alternative educational settings.
  - b. Inviting art therapists and art educators to participate in panels at national and state conferences in both disciplines.
  - c. Regional or state collaborative conferences.
4. A future study might investigate school art versus spontaneous art created by students in art education classes.

5. Future research could examine how real or perceived censorship limits art work and impacts art education. How does censorship of imagery impact students in art education?

### Continuing Reflections

This study investigated art education pedagogy and practice with adolescent students at-risk who attend school in alternative high schools. These students are dealing with intense issues of “life + death, body + blood, joy + pain, love + hate” every day. This is their world. It may not look pretty, but it is their reality (see Figure 29). The art teacher respondents in this study practice what I call transformation art pedagogy. They have transformed and reshaped traditional art pedagogy and curriculum to address the needs of adolescent students at-risk in alternative high schools. Their art education pedagogy and practice offers these troubled students at-risk opportunities to acquire art knowledge and engage in art making that assists their transition from *torn to form*. As hooks (1994) advocates in *Teaching to Transgress, Education as a Practice of Freedom*, Mona and Louise teach “in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of [their] students [that] is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin” (p. 13).

Arts-based research informed my thinking and my processing strategies during the analysis and writing of this dissertation. I created many art works to make sense of

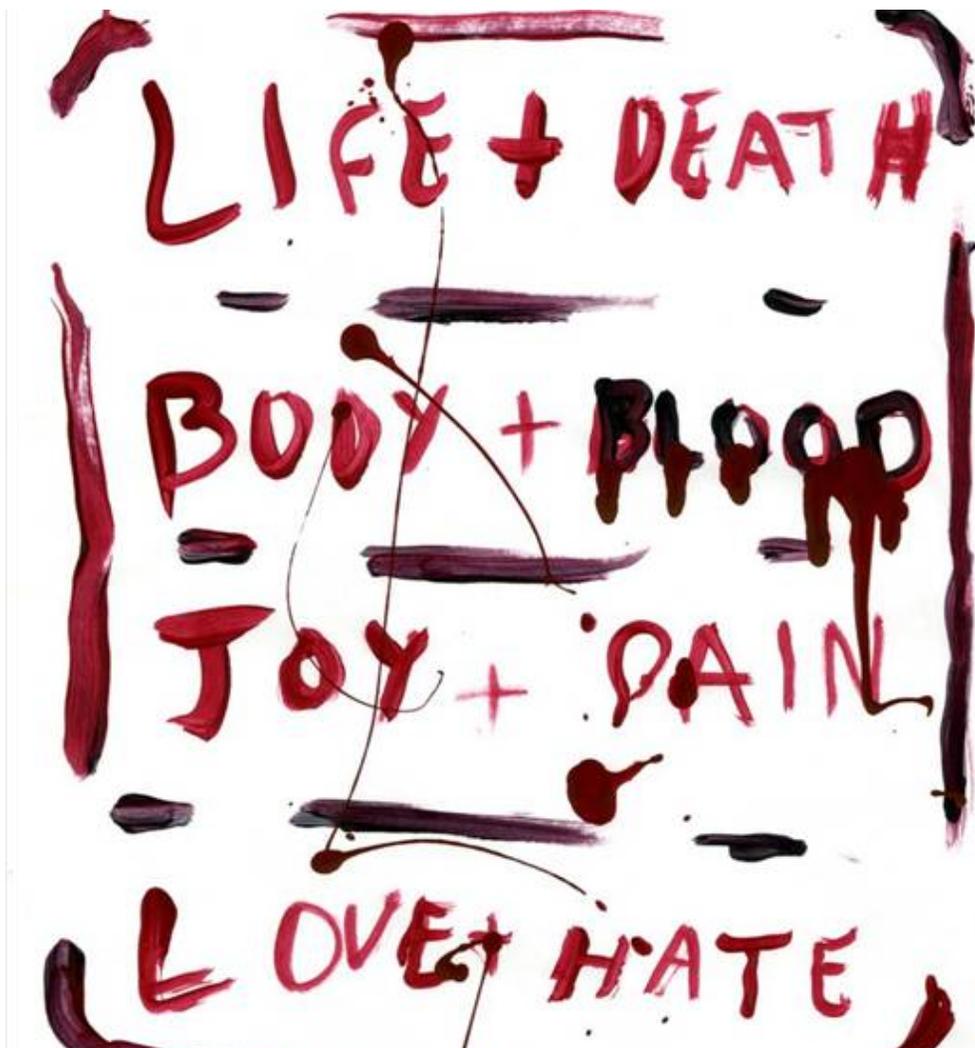


Figure 29. *Free painting*, Art student, From the Collection of Louise.

this research experience. For a final project (a collage/assemblage), I incorporated bits and pieces of information, stories and data, literally and figuratively. I re(searched), re(looked), re(examined), re(explored), re(organized), re(arranged) and re(connect)ed with the data. The resulting art work has three main elements: the central drawing (with bits of torn paper, real cicada wings, and two visual memo cards) and two vertical sections flanked by eight visual memo cards (collaged with handwritten

notes/doodles, magazine images, and scraps of diagrams, drawings, and dissertation drafts). The middle drawing was inspired by the Irish Spirit Wheel (MacEowen, 2007), a student's art work with a corn stalk, and the mosaic water fountain outside the art classroom at Kozol. The three large spheres in the center represent my identities as an artist/educator/researcher (Irwin, 2004) and the ears of corn represent kernels of new knowledge. This art work illustrates a transformation from "torn" to form, from chaos to order, from part(s) to whole.

This process of art making during this project allowed me to "structurally corroborate" the data (Eisner, 1991) by "putting together a constellation of bits and pieces of evidence to substantiate conclusions" (p. 55). The song *Putting it Together*, from the play *Sunday in the Park with George*, seems a fitting introduction to my culminating art work located on the last page of this document (see Figure 30).

*Bit by bit, putting it together  
 Piece by piece, only way to make a work of art  
 Every moment makes a contribution  
 Every little detail plays a part  
 Having just a vision's no solution  
 Everything depends on execution  
 Putting it together, that's what counts!  
 Ounce by ounce, putting in together  
 Small amounts, adding up to make a work of art  
 First of all you need a good foundation  
 The art of making art  
 Is putting it together, bit by bit...*

(Written by Stephen Sondheim)



Figure 30. *Bit by Bit, Putting it Together, 32"x40"*

## REFERENCES

- Alter-Muri, S. (1998). Texture in the melting pot. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 15(4), 245-251.
- American Art Therapy Association (1985). Art therapy in the schools – A position paper of the American Art Therapy Association. *Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* 2(1), 13-14.
- American Art Therapy Association, Inc. (AATA) (n.d. ). About art therapy. Retrieved April 15, 2007 from <http://www.arttherapy.org/aboutarttherapy>
- Anderson, F. E. (1975). *Art-centered education and therapy for children with disabilities*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Anderson, F. E. (1980). Art therapy: Myths and realities. *Art Education*, 33(4), 18-21.
- Anderson, F. E. (1984). Mainstreaming art as well as children. *Art Education*, 28(8), 26-29.
- Anderson, F. E. (1992). *Art for all children: Approaches to art therapy for all children with disabilities*. Springfield, IL: Charles Thomas.
- Anderson, T., & Milbrandt, M. (2005). *Art for life*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Andrus, L. (2006). Art education, art therapy, and therapeutic teaching. In B. L. Gerber, & D. P. Guay (Eds.), *Reaching and teaching students with special needs* (pp. 177-188). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Apple, M. (2000). *Official knowledge*. New York: Routledge.
- Apple, M. (2006). *Educating the “right” way: Markets, standards, God, and inequality* (2<sup>nd</sup>. ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Aron, L. Y. (2006). *An overview of alternative education*. Washington, DC: US Department of Labor: The Urban Institute.
- Aron, L. Y. (2003). *Towards a typology of alternative education programs*. Washington, DC: US Department of Labor: The Urban Institute.

- Art 21 (n.d.). Kiki Smith. Retrieved May 7, 2008 from [www.pbs.org/art21/slideshow/?artist/68](http://www.pbs.org/art21/slideshow/?artist/68)
- Art in the lives of persons with special needs (1980, August 7). *Proceedings of a joint conference of the National Art Education Association, Inc. and the American Art Therapy Association, Inc.* through the support of the National Committee on Arts for the Handicapped. NCAH, J. F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Education Office, Washington, DC 20566.
- Atkinson, D., & Dash, P. (2005). *Social and critical practices in art education*. Staffordshire, UK: Trentham Books.
- Barr, R. (1972). The age of alternatives: A developing trend in education reform. *Changing Schools*, 1(1), 1-3.
- Barr, R. , & Parrett, W. H. (1995). *Hope at last for at-risk youth*. Needham Heights, MA: Simon and Schuster.
- Barth, R. S. (1991). *Learning By heart*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of seeing: A book made by John Berger*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Betensky, M. G. (1995). *What do you see? Phenomenology of therapeutic art*. Bristol, PA: Jessica Kingsley.
- Bishop, W. (1999). *Ethnographic writing research: Writing it down, writing it up, and reading it*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Bush, J. (1997). *The handbook of school art therapy: Introducing art therapy into a school system*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Bush, J. (2006). How do art therapy, art education, school counseling and school psychology differ? In *About School Art Therapy*. Retrieved September 15, 2006, from <http://www.schoolarttherapy.com>
- Burton, J. M. (1981). Developing minds: Representing experiences: Ideas in search of forms. *School Arts*, 81, 58-64.
- Calkins, L. M. (1983). *Lessons from a child*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Cane, F. (1951). *The artist in each of us*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Clark, G., & Zimmerman, E. (2000). Greater understanding of the local community: A community-based art education program for rural schools. *Art Education*, 53(2), 33-39.

- Cohen, F. (1974). Introducing art therapy into a school system: Some problems. *Art Psychotherapy*, 2, 121-136.
- Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1994). *Research methods in education* (4th ed.). London: Routledge.
- Collins, G., & Sandell, R. (1984). *Women, art, and education*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Cosier, K. J. (2001). *From the outside, in: An ethnographic case study of an art classroom in an alternative high school for at-risk students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Indiana University. Retrieved February 18, 2007, from the ProQuest database.
- Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Dalton, P. (2001). *The gendering of art education: Modernism, identity, and critical feminism*. Buckingham, UK & Philadelphia, PA: Open University.
- Darts, D. (2004). Visual culture jam: Art, pedagogy, and creative resistance. *Studies in Art Education*, 45(4), 313-327.
- Darts, D. (2006). Art education for change: Contemporary issues and the visual arts. *Art Education*, 59(5), 6-12.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) (1994). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research*. CA: Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) (2003). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- De la Rosa, D. A. (1998). Why alternative education works? *High School Journal* 81(4), 268-73.
- Desai, D. (2005). Places to go: Challenges in multicultural art education in a global economy. *Studies in Art Education*, 46(4), 293-308.
- Deitch, J., Sirmans, F., & Vassell, N. (Eds.) (2007). *Jean-Michel Basquiat 1981: The studio of the street*. Milan: Edizioni Charta.

- Deutsch, N. (2004). Positionality and the pen: Reflections on the process of becoming a feminist researcher and writer. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(6), 885-902.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: Free Press.
- Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York: Minton, Balch & Co.
- Dugger, J., & Dugger, C. (1998). An evaluation of an alternative high school program. *High School Journal*, 81(4), 218-234. Retrieved April 3, 2007 from the Academic Search Premier database.
- Duncum, P., & Bracey, T. (Eds.) (2001). *On knowing: Art and visual culture*. Christchurch, New Zealand: Canterbury University Press.
- Dunn-Snow, P., & D'Amelio, G. (2000). How art teachers can enhance art making as a therapy experience: Art education and art therapy. *Art Education*, 53(3), 46-53.
- Efland, A. (1990). *A history of art education: Intellectual and social currents in teaching the visual arts*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Efland, A., Freedman, K., & Stuhr, P. (1996). *Postmodern art education: An approach to curriculum*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Eichelberger, R. T. (1989). *Disciplined inquiry: Understanding and doing educational research*. New York: Longman.
- Eisner, E. W. (1972). *Educating artistic vision*. New York: Macmillan.
- Eisner, E. W. (1987). *The role of discipline based art education in the schools*. CA: The Getty Center for Education in the Arts.
- Eisner, E. W. (1988). Discipline-based art education: Its criticism and its critics. *Art Education*, 41(6), 7-13.
- Eisner, E. W. (1991). *The enlightened eye. Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New York: Macmillan.
- Eisner, E. W., & Ecker, D. W. (1970). Some historical developments in art education, In G. Pappas, (Ed.) *Concepts in art education* (pp. 12-25). New York: Macmillan.
- Fahey, P., & Frickman, L. (1996). Fusing art, economics and social reform: Ya/ya's art as activism. *Art Education*, 53(5), 40-45.

- Freedman, K. (1994). Interpreting gender and visual culture in art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 35(93), 157-170.
- Freedman, K. (2000). Social perspectives on art education in the U. S: Teaching visual culture in a democracy. *Studies in Art Education*, 41(4), 314-329.
- Freedman, K. (2003). *Teaching visual culture: Curriculum, aesthetics and the social life of art*. Reston, VA: Teachers College Press & National Art Education Association.
- Freedman, K. (2007). Artmaking/troublmaking: Creativity, policy and leadership in art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 48(2), 204-217.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum Books.
- Frostig, K., & Essex, M. (1998). *Expressive arts therapies in schools: A supervision and program guide*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Gablik, S. (1992). *The reenchantment of art*. New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc.
- Gajda, R., & Dorfman, D. (2006). Career Academies and the Arts: Implications for Schooling. *Art Education*, 59(5), 13-18.
- Garbarino J., Kostelny, K., & Dubrow, N. (1991). *No place to be a child: Growing up in a war zone*. New York: Lexington.
- Garber, E. (2001). How can theory inform knowing and teaching about art? In P. Duncum & T. Bracey (Eds.), *On knowing: Art and visual culture* (pp. 99-114). Christchurch, New Zealand: Canterbury University Press.
- Garoian, C. (2000). *Performing pedagogy: Toward an art of politics*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Garrison, R. (1987). Alternative schools for disruptive youth, *NSSC Resource Paper*, National School Safety Center, (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 293 198).
- Gaudelius, Y., & Spiers, P. (2002). *Contemporary issues in art education*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Giroux, H. (1992). *Border crossings: Cultural workers and the politics of education*. London: Routledge.

- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Glasser, W. (1965). *Reality therapy*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Greene, M. (2001). Charting our own ways toward meaning in various works of art. In M. Greene (Ed.), *Variations on a blue guitar: The Lincoln Center Institute lectures on aesthetic education* (pp. 92-97). New York and London: Teachers College Press.
- Greene, M. (1978). *Landscapes of learning*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Greene, M. (1991). Foreward. In N. Noddings & C. Witherell (Eds.), *Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Greer, W. D. (1984). Discipline based art education: Approaching art as a subject of study. *Studies in Art Education*, 25(4), 212-218.
- Groves, P. (1998). Meeting the needs of 'at risk' students: The day and night... *The High School Journal*, 81(4), 251. Retrieved April 3, 2007 from the Academic Search Premier database.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Guesnell, T. (1996). *The enhancement of self-esteem in elementary school children using a creative art therapy program*. Master's thesis, Prescott College. Phoenix, AZ.
- Hallquist, R. (2008). Tough talk: Conversations with students, teachers, parents and administrators about censorship and free expression in high school. *Art Education*, 61(3), 42-47.
- Hamblen, J. (2005). *PTSD in children and adolescents*. Retrieved July 29, 2005 from [www.ncptsd.va.gov/facts/specific/fs\\_children.html](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/facts/specific/fs_children.html)
- Henley, D. (1992). *Exceptional children exceptional art*. Worcester, MA: Davis Publications.
- Henley, D. (1997). Art of disturbance: Provocation and censorship in art education. *Art Education*, 50(4), 39-45.

- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Yaser, M. L. (2004). *Feminist perspectives on social science research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Higgs, G. E., & Tarsi, N. L. (1997). New learning and agency in the at-risk student. In R. F. Kronick (Ed.), *At-risk youth: Theory, practice and reform* (pp. 119-142). New York: Haworth Press.
- Hite, S. P. (1996). A reference library for school art therapists. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 13(3), 202-204.
- Hixson, J., & Tinzman, M. (1990). *Who Are "At-Risk" Students of the 1990's?* Retrieved March 24, 2006, <http://ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/rpl.esys/rquity.htm>
- Hobbs, J. A., & Rush, J. C. (1997). *Teaching children art*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Simon & Schuster.
- Hoepfner, R., & Silverman, R. H. (1969). *Developing and evaluating art curricula specifically designed for disadvantaged youth*. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare; Office of Education, Bureau of Research.
- Hogan, S. (Ed.) (1997). *Feminist approaches to art therapy*. London: Routledge.
- hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as a practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Irwin, R. L. (2004). A/r/tography: A metonymic metissage. In Rita L. Irwin & Alex de Cosson (Eds.), *A/r/tography: Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry* (pp. 27-38). Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.
- Johnson, B. J., & Wetherill, K. S. (1998). HSJ special issue introduction alternative schooling. *High School Journal*, 81(4), 117-183.
- Kaminsky, J. (Producer). (1999). *Paint me a future*. Mad Chase Productions.
- Kapitan, L. (2000). Playing chaos into coherence: Educating the postmodern art therapist. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 17(7), 111-117.
- Kapitan, L. (2006). Global perspectives of practice. *Art Therapy*, 23(2), 50-51.

- Kay, L. (2007). Art education as a practice of freedom. *Thresholds in Education*, 33(2, 3), 24-27.
- Korzenik, D. (1990). A developmental history of art education. In D. Soucy & M. Stankiewicz (Eds.), *Framing the Part: Essays on art education* (pp. 200-212), Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Kramer, E. (1958). *Art therapy in a children's community*. Springfield, IL: Charles Thomas.
- Kramer, E. (1980). Art Therapy and Art Education: Overlapping Functions. *Art Education*, 33(4), p. 16-17.
- Lacy, S. (Ed.) (1994). *Mapping the terrain: New genre public art*. Seattle, WA: Bay Press.
- Lanier, V. (1982). *The arts we see: A simplified introduction to the visual arts*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lather, P. (1988). Feminist perspectives on empowering research methodologies. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 11, 569- 581.
- Lehr, C. A., & Lange, C. M. (2003). Alternative schools serving students with or without disabilities: What are the current issues and challenges? *Preventing School Failure*, 47(2), 59-65.
- Leone, P. E., & Drakeford, W. (1999). Alternative education: From a last chance to a proactive model. *The Clearinghouse*, 3(2), 86-88.
- Lim, M. (2006, October). *Integrating social issues*. Paper presented at annual meeting of the Illinois Art Education Association, Chicago, IL.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. London: Sage Publications.
- Linesch, D.G. (1988). *Adolescent art therapy*. Levittown, PA: Brunner Mazel.
- Losel, S. D. (2006). Students with physical disabilities. In Gerber, B. L. & D. P. Guay (Eds.), *Reaching and teaching students with special needs* (pp. 107-126). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Lowenfeld, V. (1947/1957). *Creative and mental growth*. New York: Macmillan.
- MacEowen, F. (2007). *The Celtic way of seeing: Meditations on the Irish spirit wheel*. Novata, CA: New World Library.

- Madeja, S. (2002). *Visual culture: What's it all about!* Unpublished essay, Northern Illinois University.
- Marshall, J. (2004). Metaphor in art, thought and learning. In D. Smith-Shank (Ed.), *Semiotics and visual culture: Sights, signs and significance* (pp. 63-71). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Maslow, A. (1968). *Towards a psychology of being*. New York: D. Van Nostrand Co.
- Mayer, J. (2006). Waiting on the world to change. Retrieved April 1, 2008, from [www.songlyrics.com/songlyrics/John+Mayer/Miscellaneous/Waiting+On+The+World+To+Change/256244.html](http://www.songlyrics.com/songlyrics/John+Mayer/Miscellaneous/Waiting+On+The+World+To+Change/256244.html)
- McCann, R. A. (1991). At-risk students: Defining the problem. In K. M. Kershner, & J. A. Connolly (Eds.), *At-risk students and school restructuring* (pp. 13-16). Washington DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- McCloskey, L., & Walker, M. (2000). Post traumatic stress in children exposed to violence and single event trauma. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 39(1), 108-115.
- McFee, J., & Degge, R. (1980). *Art, culture, and environment: Catalyst for teaching*. Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt.
- McFee, J. K. (1961). *Preparations for art*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- McNiff, S. (1992). *Art as medicine: Creating a therapy of the imagination*. Boston, MA: Shambala.
- McNiff, S. (1998). *Art-based research*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA. : Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mertens (2005). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Metcalf, S., Gervais, J., Dase, M., & Griseta, L. (2005). Dis/Ability through artists' eyes. *Art Education*, 58 (4), 25-32.
- Michael, J. (1988). *The Lowenfeld lectures: Viktor Lowenfeld on art education and therapy*. University Park and London: The Pennsylvania University Press.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Moon, B. (1990). *Existential art therapy. The canvas mirror*. Springfield, IL: Charles Thomas Publishers.
- Morreau, L., & Anderson, F. E. (1984). Individual education programs in art: Benefit or burden. *Art Education*, 37(6), 10-14.
- National Art Education Association. (1991). *Censorship and the arts*. Retrieved April 24, 2008, from <http://naea-reston.org/pdf/censo.pdf>
- National Association of State Boards of Education. (1996). Alternative education for students' at-risk. *Policy update*. 4(8). Alexandria, VA. : Policy Information Clearinghouse.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (n.d.). *Educational Statistics Quarterly*, 3(1), Retrieved April 15, 2007, from <http://nces.ed.gov>.
- Naumberg, M. (1950). *An introduction to art therapy: Studies of "free" art expression of behavior problem children as a means of diagnosis and therapy*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. (2005). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. ). New York: Teachers College Press.
- O'Thearling, S., & Bickley-Green, C. A. (1996). Art education and at-risk youth: Enabling factors of visual expression. *Visual Art Research*. Champaign Urbana, IL: Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois.
- Packard, S., & Anderson, F. (1976). A shared identity crisis: Art education and art therapy. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 16(7), 21-28.
- Paglin, C., & Fager, J. (1997). *Alternative schools: Approaches for students at-risk*. Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation methods*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Poelstra, S. (1996). *The dilemma of the at-risk student: Selected case studies of art educators*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Arizona. Retrieved February 18, 2007, from Proquest Dissertations and Theses.
- Presseison, B. (1991). At risk students: Defining a population. In Kershner, K. M. & Connolly, J. A. (Eds.), *At-risk students and school restructuring* (pp. 5-11). Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Raw Art Works. (n.d.). Retrieved May 1, 2007, from <http://www.rawart.org>.

- Raywid, M. A. (1991). Up from agape: Response to "caring" by Nel Noddings. In Pinar, W. (Ed.), *Contemporary curriculum discourses* (pp. 61-67). New York: Peter Lang.
- Raywid, M. A. (1994). Alternative schools: The state of the art. *Educational Leadership*, 52(1), 26-31.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social science research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Robbins, A., & Sibley, L. B. (1976). *Creative art therapy*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Robson, C. (Ed.) (1997). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Roderick, M. (2003). What's happening to the boys? Early high school experiences and school outcomes among African-American male adolescents in Chicago. *Urban Education*, 38(5), 538-607.
- Rubin, J. A. (1980). Art therapy today. *Art Education*, 33(4), 6-8 .
- Rubin, J. A. (1982). Art therapy: What it is and what it is not. *American Journal of Art Therapy* 21, 57-58.
- Rubin, J. A. (1999). *Art therapy. An introduction*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Rubin, J. A. (2005a). *Artful therapy*. NJ: Wiley.
- Rubin, J. A. (2005b). *Art therapy has many faces*. Pittsburgh, PA: Expressive Media, Inc.
- Sandell, R. (1979). Feminist art education: An analysis of women's art movement as an educational force. *Studies in Art Education* 20(2), 18-28.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1997). *Qualitative inquiry: A dictionary of terms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (pp. 221-259). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York and London: Teachers College Press.

- Sergiovanni, T. J., & Starratt, R. J. (2001). *Supervision: A re-definition*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Shakespeare.com. Retrieved April 30, 2008, from [http:// www.shakespeare.com](http://www.shakespeare.com).
- Shumow, L., & Perry, B. (2006). *Literature review on trauma, stress, and its implications for the education of children in foster care*. Paper presented at the Symposium on Trauma, Stress, and the Education of Children and Youth in Foster Care, Naperville, Illinois.
- Silver, R. (1984). Review of the Lowenfeld lectures: Viktor Lowenfeld on art education and therapy. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 1(2), 90.
- Smith-Shank, D. (Ed.). (2004). *Semiotics and visual culture: Sights, signs and significance*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- St. John, P. (1986). Art education, therapeutic art and art therapy: Some relationships. *Art Education*, 39(1), 14-16.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Steele, W. (2002). Trauma's impact on learning and behavior: A case for intervention in schools. *Trauma and Loss Journal*, 2(2), 1-16. Retrieved April 1, 2006, from <http://tlcinstitute.org/impactarticle.html>
- Stepney, S. A. (2001). *Art therapy with students at risk: Introducing art therapy into an alternative learning environment for adolescents*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Streisand, B. (1986). Putting it together. Retrieved May 27, 2008, from [www.seeklyrics.com/lyrics/Barbra.Streisand/Putting-it-together](http://www.seeklyrics.com/lyrics/Barbra.Streisand/Putting-it-together)
- Sullivan, G. (2005). *Art practice as research: Inquiry in the visual arts*. New York: Teachers College.
- Twiss, P., & Cooper, P. (2000). Youth revitalizing Main Street: A case study. *Social Work in Education*, 22(3), 162.
- Ulman, E. (1961). Art therapy: Problems of definition. *Bulletin of Art Therapy*, 1(2), 10-20.
- Ulman, E., & Dachinger, P. (Eds.). (1978). *Art therapy in theory and practice*. New York: Schocken Books.

- U. S. Department of Education, National Center of Education Statistics (2002). *Characteristics of 100 largest public elementary and secondary school districts in the United States: 2000-01*, NCES 2002-351, Washington, D. C. Retrieved April 8, 2007, from <http://nces.ed.gov/pub2002/2002351.pdf>
- Veneble, B. (2005). At-risk and in-need: Reaching juvenile offenders through art. *Art Education*, 58(4), 48-53.
- Vygotsky, L. (1987). *Thought and language* (A. Kozuline, Ed.). Cambridge, MA. MIT Press.
- Warren, L. A. (1995). An interview: Helen Landgarten. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 34, 34-42.
- Webster Online Dictionary (n.d.). Retrieved February 15, 2007, from <http://www.websters.com>
- Wilder, T. (1938). *Our town*. New York: Coward McCann, Inc.
- White, D. (2003). *The versatility and value of alternative education, Part I: Overview and orientation*. Washington, D. C.: The George Washington University, Hamilton Fish Institute.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER, INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 1, 2007



NORTHERN ILLINOIS  
UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: Lisa Kay  
Department of Teaching & Learning  
12803 Williams Rd.  
Genoa, IL 60135

OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES  
DeKalb, ILLINOIS 60115-2864  
(815) 753-8588  
FAX (815) 753-1631  
E-MAIL [researchcompliance@niu.edu](mailto:researchcompliance@niu.edu)  
WEB [www.grad.niu.edu/orc](http://www.grad.niu.edu/orc)

FR: Michael Peddle, Vice-Chair  
Institutional Review Board #2

RE: Graduate student research involving the use of human subjects for the project titled *Art education pedagogy and practice in alternative high schools*

This is to inform you that the above-named application for human subjects research has been approved by Subcommittee Review. The rationale for expedited review is section 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110, Category 6&7. Although you may begin data collection immediately, please be advised that federal regulations require that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) be made aware of all research activities that place human subjects at maximum or minimum risk. Your application will be brought to the attention of the IRB at its next meeting.

This approval is effective for one year from the date of this letter. I have enclosed a date-stamped copy of the approved consent form for your use. NIU policy requires that informed consent documents given to subjects participating in non-exempt research bear the approval stamp of the NIU IRB. **This stamped document is the only consent form that may be photocopied for distribution to study participants.** If your project will continue beyond that date, or if you intend to make modifications to the study, you will need additional approval and should contact the Office of Research Compliance for assistance. **Continuing review of the project, conducted at least annually, will be necessary until you no longer retain any identifiers that could link the subjects to the data collected.**

It is important for you to note that as a research investigator involved with human subjects, **you are responsible for ensuring that this project has current IRB approval at all times, and for retaining the signed consent forms obtained from your subjects for a minimum of three years after the study is concluded.** If consent for the study is being given by proxy (guardian, etc.), it is your responsibility to document the authority of that person to consent for the subject. Also, the committee recommends that you include an acknowledgment by the subject, or the subject's representative, that he or she has received a copy of the consent form. In addition, you are required to promptly report to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems or risks to subjects and others. Please accept my best wishes for success in your research endeavors.

MP/psw

cc: N. Dorsch  
D. Smith-Shank  
C. Law  
Institutional Review Board members  
ORC (#2925)

**APPENDIX B**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Art Education Pedagogy and Practice in Alternative High Schools**  
**Lisa Kay**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**A. Authorization**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Participant's Name), hereby consent to participate in a study, Art Education Pedagogy and Practice in Alternative High Schools which will involve classroom observations, a three-interview series, and a review of instructional materials performed by Lisa Kay.

**B. Description**

This study will involve observations in your classroom, a series of personal interviews about art education of youth at-risk in alternative schools, review of ordinary instructional materials (lesson plans, curriculum, and artwork) and collecting artifacts related to teaching including lesson plans and examples of student artwork, and informal conversations with students and staff. The study is being conducted through Northern Illinois University.

The purpose of this study is to interrogate and illuminate art pedagogy and curricula with youth at-risk in alternative school settings and identify teaching strategies that are being used.

Classroom observations will take place twice weekly for two class periods for one semester. Three interviews will take approximately 30-45 minutes each. They will be conducted at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the semester. The interview(s) will be tape-recorded. Once the tape recordings are transcribed, the researcher will modify and code the names included in the transcripts to secure anonymity. Although no questions are intended to be sensitive in nature, you may elect not to answer any questions you do not desire to answer. Additionally, you may terminate the interview at any time with no prejudice or penalty.

There are no experimental procedures involved with this study. No physical risks are foreseeable. There are no perceived emotional, social, or psychological risks. All data will be kept confidential in that names will not be divulged in a verbal or written manner. If you request, the researcher will not include any specified information in the research reports (dissertation or articles).

All names will be kept confidential. If any quotes are used in any way in a research report, they will be given a pseudonym. The same is true of any other institutions or organizations mentioned in the interview. Once the study is completed data collected including tape recordings, observational notes, coding sheets and field memos will be securely stored by the researcher for 5 years.

If you have any questions about the research study, you can contact:

Lisa Kay  
 (815) 754-9471  
 lkay@niu.edu  
 OR

Dr. Deborah Smith-Shank  
 (815) 751-2631 debshank@niu.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant contact:  
 Office of University Compliance  
 Northern Illinois University  
 DeKalb, IL 60115  
 (815) 752-8588

**C. Benefits**

Participants will have opportunity to express their ideas to the researcher.

**D. Voluntary Participation**

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I will not be penalized if I choose not to participate. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and end my participation in this project at any time without penalty after I notify Lisa Kay.

**E. Consent**

I have read and fully understood the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. I have received a copy of this form.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (A.M./P.M.)

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to be audio-tape recorded during the interview:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX C  
TEACHER PROFILE FORM

Teacher Profile Form

Educational background

Years of teaching experience

Years teaching art.

List your certification (s)

Where you teach?

What classes you teach?

Age range of students

What is the average number of students in your classes?

What pseudonym you would like used to protect your identity?

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR

## LETTER TO PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR

August, 2007

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear XXXXXXXXXX,

I am a doctoral student at Northern Illinois University conducting a dissertation research project titled, Art Education Pedagogy and Practices in Alternative Schools. The purpose of this letter is to explain my research study and to request your support. This multiple case study will be undertaken to understand the content, pedagogy, and implications for art education with youth who are labeled at-risk. The purpose of this study is to interrogate and illuminate art pedagogy and curricula with at-risk students in alternative school settings. It is hoped that this study will inform the field about this growing and yet little known phenomenon.

To gather necessary data, I plan to observe in the art education classroom two times per week for one semester. I intend to conduct multiple interviews with your art teacher who has agreed to participate. Their beliefs, insights and perceptions will be extremely valuable in answering my research questions. I will also review ordinary instructional documents (lesson plans, curriculum, and artwork). In addition I will photograph the art room with no students present and student artwork without any names. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

I am available to answer any of your questions. My contact number is 815-715-8986.

Sincerely,

Lisa Kay  
Doctoral Candidate  
Teaching and Learning  
College of Education  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, IL.

APPENDIX E  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Interview Questions

Time of Interview:            Date:            Setting:

Interviewer:                Respondent:

How did you come to teach at an alternative school?

How were you prepared in your education to work with these students in this setting?

What additional preparation or training would you like if any?

Describe your teaching philosophy with youth at risk?

Do you adapt your pedagogy and curriculum to work with youth in this setting? If so, how?

How would you describe your students?

Compare and contrast students in your school with students in a typical high school.

How would you handle a violent student in your class?

How would you handle a withdrawn student?

When they aren't violent or withdrawn what words describe your students?

Do your students have any unique needs that are being addressed in your art classes?

Describe your biggest success? Describe your greatest challenge?

Does your alternative school make the distinction between art education and art therapy?

Describe a student in one of your classes who has used visual culture in his/her art.

Do you integrate students' visual culture(s) in the art education curriculum?

Do you restrict the content of students' artwork? Why? Why not?

Have you ever had a student who created art work with disturbing content? How did you handle it?

How can art education change to meet the specific needs of your unique situation?

What do you want to tell me that I have neglected to ask?

Thank you for participating in this interview.  
Your confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

APPENDIX F  
OBSERVATION SHEET

## Observation Sheet

Date:                      Time/Length of Observation:                      Observation Number:

Site Code: A B    Class Code: A1 A2 A3 A4 A5 B1 B2 B3 B4 B5

<u>Descriptive Notes</u>	<u>Reflective Notes</u>

APPENDIX G

CONTEMPORARY ART EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ART THERAPY

## Contemporary Art Education and School Art Therapy

CONTEMPORARY ART EDUCATION	CONNECTING ARTERY	SCHOOL ART THERAPY
Art + Education blends <i>critical social issues, contemporary art, and pedagogy</i>	Art	Art + Therapy emphasizes visual art processes and verbalizations as the primary modality for <i>assessment and treatment</i>
<i>Socio-critical and cultural</i> practice that focuses on art media as a means to an end		<i>Psycho-educational therapeutic</i> intervention that focuses on art media as primary expressive and communicative channels.
Provides opportunities to create <i>art in a social context</i> that engages the learner(s) in a practice that focuses on the <i>exploration of personal and social ideas and/or identities</i> in visual form.		Facilitates appropriate <i>social behavior</i> and promotes healthy affective development so that learners become receptive to learning, realizing their social and academic potential.
Art <i>as learning</i>		Art <i>in learning</i>
Art educators <i>teach</i> students who have a myriad of problems including anxiety, depression, and other mental and emotional disorders; social and emotional difficulties related to disability, illness, trauma, and loss; physical, cognitive, and neurological problems; and psychosocial difficulties		Art therapists <i>treat</i> students' myriad of problems including anxiety, depression, and other mental and emotional disorders; social and emotional difficulties related to disability, illness, trauma, and loss; physical, cognitive, and neurological problems; and psychosocial difficulties (AATA).
Formal art elements are taught but not main focus of lesson	Elements of art	Elements of art taught to assist therapeutic expression
The art classroom is a site for <i>personal inquiry and reflection</i> on art with both individual and social content.		The art therapy room is a place to <i>identify and explore personal problems / potentials</i> through nonverbal and verbal expression and reconcile emotional conflicts
Interrogates images of self and of others	Self and others	Facilitates the expression of art about self and others

CONTEMPORARY ART EDUCATION	CONNECTING ARTERY	SCHOOL ART THERAPY
Investigates creative and cultural experiences that address social issues (diversity, home/family, race, class, sexism, gender) via the visual arts.	Social	Examines family dynamics and interpersonal relationships
Students art as commentary on social justice, community change, or the environment (“art that personalizes social issues” Freedman)		Student art as reflection of personal issues, developmental levels, projection of emotional conflicts,
Art as semiotic communication		Art as symbolic communication
Narrative art from students’ experience		Therapeutic art from students’ experience
Personal story	Art as story	Personal story
Makes connections between art and culture	Culture	Connections made between individual and culture
Concern for difference(s) and the ‘other’		Cultural diversity important
Assist students’ formation of identity	Identity	Explores self identity issues re-builds self esteem
Positive impact on students at-risk	At-risk	Positive impact on students at-risk
Teachers respond to students’ social, behavioral and emotional issues	Witness	Therapists responds to students’ social, behavioral, and emotional issues
Teachers respond to students’ visual documents psychosocially	Visual Documents	Therapists respond to students’ visual documents therapeutically
Facilitates personal expression that can have healing value	Self expression	Facilitates personal expression for therapeutic ends
Assessment (grades summative and formative)		Formal assessment and ongoing progress
Develops social and cultural awareness through transformation of ideas and images		Develops physical, emotional, and/or learning skills through therapeutic experiences

CONTEMPORARY ART EDUCATION	CONNECTING ARTERY	SCHOOL ART THERAPY
Encourages students to navigate and question their place in society in relation to self and others.		Facilitates understanding of place in family and social network as relates to emotional issues
Art teachers draw or paint directly on student art work to illustrate technique or process	Helping	Art therapists use their artistic skills in the service of helping others
Involves the creation of artwork that includes self-identification and incorporates aspects of students' visual culture.		Creation of artwork that includes self-identification, cognitive levels, trauma indicators
encourages students to reflect upon their own images, images of others, and the plethora of images and issues that they encounter in everyday life		Analysis and interpretation of images created in the context of therapy
Multiple theoretical perspectives, including postmodern, feminist, multicultural, popular and visual culture, and community (Gaudelius, 2005).		Multiple theoretical perspectives including child-centered, attachment, object relations, psychoanalytic, art as therapy
Relevant to a child's education and social and emotional maturation		Relevant to a child's education and social and emotional maturation